LIFE of S. EALDHELM

FIRST BISHOP OF SHERBORNE

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From a bronze figure on the Digby Monument at Sherborne.

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BY

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For eallum Ealdhelmes folce,
and maest
for leofostum cnapum,
T.B.W. and A.B.W.
mid the on Westseaxum
full=blithe oft for ic,
thas lytlan boc
ic macode.

aet Scira burnan,
MCMV.

I record here my best thanks to my friend and neighbour, Mr. H. R. King, for the help he has given me in correcting proof sheets.

I owe to my friend, Mr. James Rhoades' delightful English version of Vergil's 'Georgics' the quotations given in pages 68 and 69 of this book.

W.B.W.

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CHAPTER I.

Why the year 705 concerns Sherborne more than any other place.

I HAVE reason to think, that many of my neighbours have no clear ideas about the growth and limits of Wessex. They find it hard to realize what the look of it was in Ealdhelm's time, what the condition of the English, who lived in it, was, and what the condition of the West Welsh then was, from whom the English had gradually won the territory called Wessex. It seems to me that my best course will be, to describe these matters as briefly and clearly as I can; for, until we understand them, we must have but a hazy idea of the great man, to whom Sherborne and the old diocese of Sherborne owe so much.

In speaking of the people as Welsh, from whom the West-Saxons won this land, I use the term 'Welsh' advisedly, because it is the ordinary term, which our forefathers used in speaking of them,

and it begs no question, as to whether they were Brythons or Goidels or a mixture of both. The old English word 'Wealh' means 'foreigner,' a man whose language one does not understand ; and our forefathers called those whom they dispossessed 'Wealas,' which is the plural of 'Wealh,' and they called the district, in which these men lived, by the name of the people 'Wealas' or Wales, as the word is in modern shape. Our word Welsh is the adjective 'Wealisc,' formed by the English from the word 'Wealh,' and means 'of or belonging to a stranger'; a great authority on early English history once said, that, if Englishmen would only talk about English and Welsh instead of Saxons and Britons they would get a much clearer idea of the times we are going to deal with.

It is true that our old English writers, when they wrote in *Bok-leden*, used the term 'Brittones' of the Welsh, but the ordinary every-day word in use was 'Wealas,' not only for the Britons but for the Gauls also across the Channel ; and if they wanted to distinguish between them, they called the one people Bret-Welsh and the other Gal-Welsh.

I hope therefore that, not only for shortness' sake but also for vividness' sake, I may be allowed to use the term 'Welsh' in the following narrative, wherever it is convenient for me to do so.

That a Welshman or an Irishman or a Highlander should talk about 'Saxons,' when he refers to the English, is quite permissible; they have consistently done so, and I noticed, in the *Standard* of the 1st September, 1904, an account of a Panceltic Congress at Carnarvon, at which there was a Band of Irish Pipers, and a 'shillelagh' of magnificent make was presented to the President, Lord Castletown, who delivered an Address on 'The Philistine Saxon and the Inspired Celt.' It appeared to me, that Lord Castletown had been studying a little Treatise by Matthew Arnold on 'Celtic Literature'; if his lordship's reading has been more extended in the works of Matthew Arnold, he must be aware that he belongs to the class whom that gifted writer calls 'Barbarians.' Barbarians however may be expected to be somewhat free with the shillelagh, if they happen to have one handy.

It is commonly believed, if I may judge from conversations with my neighbours about S. Ealdhelm, that the Saint spent his life as a missionary, trying to convert from Druidism the pagan Welshmen, who were then not above indulging in human sacrifices. This idea may have arisen in the minds of these students from their misunderstanding the famous letter, which Ealdhelm wrote to King Geruntius of Dumnonia; it may even have been emphasized in their minds by a remark of William

of Malmesbury, who makes an allusion to this letter in his *Gesta Pontificum*, but who had never seen it, thought it was lost, and quite misunderstood the situation.

But I have a suspicion that their idea is due to another cause ; it is due perhaps to the belief widely held by Englishmen, that they are and always have been superior to those races, with which they come into contact, not only in fighting power, which perhaps is true, but in civilization also. Before we can understand Ealdhelm's time, we have to get it quite clearly into our heads, that, when about the year 500 our English forefathers landed in Southampton Water, the Welsh men, whose land they were destined to seize, whose worship and churches they were destined to destroy, had been Christians for generations, while these English were ferocious pirates and worshippers of Woden and Thunder; that nearly a century and a half after this, when Ealdhelm was born, the West-Saxon king had only just been converted to Christianity by the preaching of S. Birinus. S. Ealdhelm's father may have been a pagan at the time of the Saint's birth; at any rate he had been a Christian only for a year or two.

I can imagine the amazement, turning gradually to indignation, which the West Welsh king Geruntius

must have felt, when he read Ealdhelm's famous letter. He and his forebears had been Christians for centuries, and he is now being told 'what he ought to do' by one whom he would be inclined to regard as a pompous Professor, whose father had worshipped Woden and Thunder.

Readers however must not gather from this, that Ealdhelm was one, whose opinion, on the matters of which he wrote, was of little importance; for he was one of the most famous scholars of his time in Western Europe; his reputation had spread through England and Ireland and Northern Gaul, and, as has been said with less truth of other famous men, 'what he did not know was not worth knowing.'

With this then by the way of introduction, I shall now proceed to show why the year 705 is peculiarly a Sherborne date. In this year Ealdhelm was made first Bishop of Sherborne. In the year 1905 therefore, the twelfth centenary of this date, we Sherborne people must be specially to the fore. The town of Malmesbury has or should have an abiding interest in S. Ealdhelm; the bulk of his mature life-time was certainly spent there, and there he was buried.

But Ealdhelm's promotion from the Abbacy of Malmesbury to the Bishop's seat at Sherborne cannot

be expected to arouse much enthusiasm in the Malmesbury heart, though it surely must touch that of Sherborne. We hope that the men of Malmesbury and all Englishmen will rejoice with us at the honour then done to Sherborne, and we would specially welcome them and the men of Bristol and their Bishop, if they will join in our celebration of this event. But we must make it quite clear that, so far as we know, there was in 705 no such place as Bristol, and that, if it did exist, it was not in Ealdhelm's diocese.

I read lately a very interesting little book called 'St. Ealdhelm, his Life and Times' by Dr. G. F. Browne, the Bishop of Bristol, wherein is written as the first heading to the first chapter 'Connection of the See of Bristol with St. Ealdhelm'; now we do not grudge our Bishop to Bristol, but the See of Bristol only dates from the times of Henry VIII. The author however pointed out 'that until the year 1836 the See of Bristol had for 300 years included the whole County of Dorset with Aldhelm's own Abbey (*sic*) of Sherborne, eventually his bishop's seat and title, his home for the last four years of his life.'

I hope the author will not think that I write in any captious spirit, when I point out, that in the first place the Cathedral Church of Sherborne was a

Church of Secular Canons in Ealdhelm's time, and that it did not become a Benedictine Abbey till 998; that in the second place the parish of Sherborne and several others in this neighbourhood were until the year 1836 a *peculiar* under the jurisdiction of the Dean of Sarum, not under that of the Bishop of Bristol.

But there is a fact of which the author makes no mention, viz : that S. Ealdhelm's own Cathedral School, now-a-days known as Sherborne School, *was* under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bristol, as visitor, from 1550 to 1871. In the library of Sherborne School are preserved the first *extant* Statutes, drawn up in 1592 for that School by Richard Fletcher, Bishop of Bristol, better known perhaps as that Dean of Peterborough, to whom fell the terrible task of attending Queen Mary Stuart on the scaffold.

The date 705 then is peculiarly a Sherborne date; in that year the name of Sherborne is first mentioned in English history; from 705 to 709 Sherborne is Ealdhelm's home, the centre of his wider work, the place where he built that wonderful church which William of Malmesbury had himself seen, that wonderful church which the Norman builders never touched till William's own day, when Roger of Caen, Bishop of Salisbury and a foe to

Malmesbury, rebuilt it in the Norman style. We have plenty of Roger's work still left in Sherborne, both in the Abbey Church and in the Old Castle.

At p. 143 of this same book our author writes in a foot-note: 'One of the Saxon doorways of this 'church is still to be seen in the North aisle. It is 'of Bradford stone.' By Bradford stone he means stone from Bradford on Avon, not from Bradford Abbas, as Sherborne folk might think. Again at p. 234 he writes: 'Mr. E. A. Ponting informs me that 'the stone first worked was the Bradford stone..... 'It is of this he tells me that ... the Saxon arch still 'remaining in the Norman Church of Sherborne ... 'is composed.' Now we cannot allow a claim like this to pass unchallenged. The stone, of which our Saxon doorway is built, comes from the great Bristol Road quarry, which lies some few hundred yards north of our Abbey Church, a quarry of enormous extent which has been worked for centuries and which extended down to Combe, where it used to be called the Old Quarr. Again there is alas! no Saxon arch still remaining; very little more is left of the doorway except the jambs. The rash Mr. Ponting mistook the oolite of Sherborne, for that which is quarried near Bradford, as any one might have done, who did not look about him when he was in Sherborne neighbourhood.

I hope however that the Bishop of Bristol will find some consolation for having been thus misled, in the thought that we call the Quarry, from which the stone came out of which our Saxon doorway was built, the *Bristol* Road Quarry.

CHAPTER II.

The Conquest of Wessex, to 639 A.D., in which year Ealdhelm was born.

I SHALL try in this chapter to give some account of the West-Saxon realm at the time of Ealdhelm's birth, *circ* 639, to describe very briefly how it had been won from the Welsh, and how this territory looked at that time.

I have long been thinking of doing this; in the course of years I have ridden on my bicycle all about the various western frontiers which Wessex has at different times possessed, and I have formed a theory about the conquest of Dorset and of the land of Exeter by the English, which I believe is sound. The conquest of Dorset by the English is a very obscure subject; there exists practically no direct evidence on the point, as it is commonly viewed. Any theory about it must be in the main a matter of guess-work ; I think however that there is a high degree of probability that mine is not far wrong.

The West-Saxons began their settlement in the neighbourhood of Southampton Water about the year 500. They called their settlement here their Home-town, and, in after time, that it might be distinguished from another Home-town further north, it was called Southampton.

The plain of Southampton and the New Forest is inclosed on three sides by chalk uplands, for the most part clear of wood; from these uplands, through this plain, to the East of the New Forest, flow two streams the Itchen and the Test. To the West of the New Forest there flows a much larger river the Avon, the Salisbury Avon I will call it for the sake of distinction; this river was navigable by the keels of these settlers for many miles. Further west flows the Dorset Stour, which enters the sea with the Avon near Christchurch. Further west again and flowing through Dorset, in a valley running mainly east and west, are the streams Frome and Piddle, which together form the inlet called Poole Harbour.

These water-ways must have suggested routes into the interior; but I shall show further on, why there were objections to following them.

The east and west sides of this plain of Southampton were also hemmed in by two great forest tracts; on the east was the Andredsweald, a

great forest stretching right away into Kent; on the west lay what the Welsh called *Coit Mawr*, i.e. the Great Forest, called by the English Selwood, consisting of what we now call the New Forest, Cranborne Chase, Blackmore, Selwood, Braden Forest and many other names, a forest stretching from the English Channel in the shape roughly of a crescent right up to Malmesbury and Cricklade, with, so far as I can make out, only one passage through it in those days, viz: that, the name of which is preserved in Woodyates on the eastern frontier of Dorset, where the Roman road from Old Sarum to Dorchester enters the county.

It must be evident then that the West-Saxons, if they wished to extend their settlement, would push northward, rather than eastward or westward, and that is what they did.

First they got possession of what is now Hampshire, called in the old time Hamptonshire; to this they added Wilts, Berks and Surrey. Then they crossed the Thames and won the territory, now represented by the shires of Oxford, Bucks and Bedford. These conquests are said to have been made by the year 571.

Then in a few years followed the conquest of what is now Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and

perhaps Herefordshire, with that part of Somerset which we shall call the land of Bath. This land was won by the victory of Deorham (Dyrham in the Cotswolds) in 577.

In an attempt however to push their advance northward to Chester the West-Saxons suffered a severe check at Fethanleag, usually identified with Faddiley in Cheshire; this check they suffered at the hands of Brocmael, a Welsh King whose territory may roughly be represented by the district of North Wales, which was in later times called Powys.

The result of this check was far reaching; the West-Saxons made no further effort to conquer the district of the Upper Severn. Dissensions broke out, it seems, among the members of the royal house; and these West-Saxons, who had lately settled along the lower Severn, in what is now Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Hereford, rose in rebellion against the King-in-chief of the West-Saxons, Ceawlin. They took for their King Ceol or Ceolric, son of Cutha Ceawlin's brother, and, according to William of Malmesbury who wrote more than 500 years after the event, they formed an alliance with the Welsh. Their combined forces defeated Ceawlin in 592, at Wanborough on the edge of the chalk downs, south-east of Swindon.

Ceawlin died soon after, leaving the West-Saxon Kingdom in a somewhat distracted condition. Ceolric, who succeeded him, appears to have united the Kingdom again; but his brother Ceolwulf, who succeeded him, had. according to the *English Chronicle*, to 'fight incessantly with Angelcyn or with Walas or with Peohtas or with Scottas.' This means that his reign was troubled by Mercian and Welsh inroads; though how Picts and Scots got here is hard to see.

We must now trace the western frontier of Wessex, as it was about 639 when Ealdhelm was born. It ran along the eastern edge of what the Welsh called Coit Mawr, and the English called Selwood. Beginning at the English Channel we follow the western border of Hampshire till we reach the southern border of Wilts; thence we turn westward along the Wilts border and then northward, keeping fairly near that border but to the east of it, to Mere; thence by Maiden Bradley, Warminster and Westbury to Devizes; thence, still keeping Coit Mawr on our left hand we go by Barbury Hill to Cricklade. Here by the head-waters of the Thames we turn westward, and, passing close by Malmesbury, we turn gradually south-westward until we reach, what for the sake of distinction I call, the Bath Avon somewhere about Bath. Here we cross the Avon and making for the Mendips we

cross them and on reaching Wookey and the Somerset Axe we follow that stream to the Bristol Channel.

To the west of this line which has just been drawn all the country as far as Land's End was in 639 held by the Welsh and it was called by old writers West Wales and in learned language Dumnonia. Now this line is of rather peculiar shape, for there runs into English territory a great wedge, projecting north-eastward from West Wales; it is forest country, the northern end of Selwood. The base of this wedge, where it joins the rest of West Wales, is a line approximately drawn from Penselwood to Wells, and its apex reaches as far as Cricklade. It is a tract of country drained by the Bath Avon and its tributaries; this wedge I propose to call, as others have done, the land of Malmesbury.

I have given no proofs of the general correctness of this boundary line, because they are well known to all students of this period; these proofs would take up considerable space and to many they would be uninteresting. But I assure readers who do not know them, that they are generally admitted to be convincing by those who have taken the trouble to examine them.

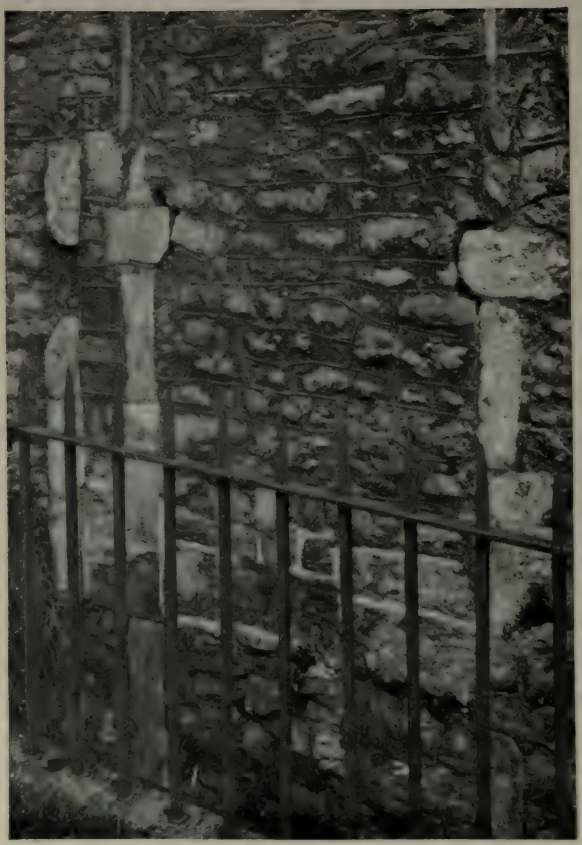
CHAPTER III.

Dorset before the West-Saxon conquest of it.

THE time has now come to say something of the district known to us as Dorset, the territory of the Welshmen which was called Dour or Dorn, the land of the Durotriges. I see no reason to doubt that the modern boundaries of the county practically correspond to those of this territory at the time when the English assailed it.

For purposes of etymology the word Durotriges naturally divides itself thus: *Duro-trig-es,* where *es* is the Latin plural ending; but what *Duro* and *trig* mean is another matter, and I feel that Professor Rhys is right, when he remarks that 'the meaning of the name is obscure.'

Not one of our maritime shires is more thoroughly cut off from the sea than Dorset. Taking Weymouth as central point on its coast we find from that point almost to Poole a line of high cliffs, and, if we look westward, we see a great barrier, the



DOORWAY OF EALDHELM'S CATHEDRAL
circ. 705.

Chesil beach, extending for ten miles, with a back water between it and the mainland. Neither the vale at the end of which Weymouth lies, nor that of Bridport extends far into the interior. There seems to be a way opened by the valley of the Dorset Stour and by those of the Frome and Piddle. Let us see how far this is true.

Any one, who has studied the lower valleys of the Frome and Piddle, can form some idea of what the country was like long ago. Even now there are places, where the streams split up into several channels, where the banks are covered with thickets and reeds and marsh plants. What must these valleys have looked like long ago, when, if trees fell, they lay holding back the water and accumulating vegetable and other matter and so helping to turn the lazy stream into a marsh; when there were no water meadows and no embankments? Except in the neighbourhood of their mouths these streams would furnish no easy way of advance. The same may be taken as true of the Stour.

Again a good deal of north and east Dorset was taken up by the forest of Selwood, and our county therefore was a land well protected along its coast and its eastern frontier. For this reason the English at first left it alone and preferred to push their conquest in a northerly direction.

Many however hold that the English did make an attempt on Dorset at an early stage in their career of conquest.

Trusting to a Welsh writer, Gildas, who was born *circ.* 516, they believe that the siege of the *Mons Badonicus* in that year was a siege of Badbury Rings by the English of Wessex, and that this siege marks the first English attack on Dorset. The siege failed,—through the heroic efforts of the mythical Arthur, according to the much later account given in the Annales Cambriae and a compilation known as Nennius.

I should like to be able to believe that Badbury is the Mons Badonicus, and that the hero Arthur, who owes so much to the imagination of the 'Inspired Celt,' did really fight there. But I must confess that Mr. Skene has persuaded me, that this Welsh victory occurred, not in our part of Britain at all, but away in the north, in Lothian perhaps, and that the people who suffered defeat at the Mons Badonicus were, not the West-Saxons, but the Northumbrians.

This however I ought to add that, if the West-Saxons did at this early time make an attack on the Welsh fortress of Badbury Rings, they advanced on it, not up the valley of the Stour, but along the Roman road which passes through Woodyates, the

gap in the Great Wood, which is treeless now as I believe it was then.

The *English Chronicle* takes no notice of this siege of the Mons Badonicus, and it is quite clear that, even if this Mons is our Badbury, there was no conquest of Dorset at that time.

And now we pass over something like a century, during which, as we have seen, the West-Saxons were busy elsewhere, till we come to the year 611, when Cynegils succeeded Ceolwulf, the last West-Saxon king whom I have mentioned. This Cynegils is for us a very important person indeed, for he was the first West-Saxon king that was a Christian.

In the *English Chronicle* for the year 614 we read that 'Cynegils and Cuichelm (his son) fought at 'Beandune and slew two thousand Welshmen and sixty-five.' It is not certain where Beandune is; Mr. J. R. Green thought it was at Bampton in Oxfordshire, and that we have here the record of a great Welsh raid, which poured over the Cotswolds from the west of the Severn, and thence passed by Cirencester into Oxfordshire. It might equally well have been a raid of the West Welsh pouring out from the land of Malmesbury. Others however think that Beandune is Bindon Hill in Dorset, not far east of Lulworth Cove; with these I am much inclined to agree.

If Beandune is Bindon Hill, we may take a leaf out of the book of the 'Inspired Celt,' who got so unmercifully beaten on this occasion, and we may imagine that here is a beginning of the conquest of south-eastern Dorset; we may imagine, what I may call the land of Wimborne, as already in English hands, and this battle as giving Purbeck also to the English with perhaps the stronghold of Wareham. If this is correct, no further results followed and Dorset generally was still free from the English.

It may be said that I have been describing Dorset as a desert land of fen and forest, and that this is out of harmony with the position I took up earlier about the civilization of the Welsh, as contrasted with the pagan barbarism of their English assailants. But there is in truth no inconsistency. In the town of Wareham, in the greater town of Dorchester, you would have found a fairly civilized life going on; in the farms perched on the rising ground in the vales and along the sides of the downs you would have seen civilized men and women and children with plenty of stock and ponies; you would have found blacksmiths at the anvil and millers grinding corn; they would go to Church on Sunday, perhaps in greater proportion than they do now-a-days. They had the good Roman roads to travel on, with sound bridges by which to cross the rivers; and if one local chief did have a feud with

another, as doubtless happened, there were places of refuge, Kraals so to speak, where wives and children with the stock could take shelter till the strife was over.

These places too would, if necessary, be strongholds against the English. In the north of Dorset, and beyond it, but still held in 639 by the Welsh, were—to mention only the mightier strongholds—Shaftesbury, Cadbury, Ham Hill, and Pilsdun; behind these again Hambledun, Rawlsbury, and Eggardun, and again Badbury Rings, Crawford Castle and Maiden Castle. In all this region of Dorn there were in 639 probably little more than 30,000 inhabitants.

I cannot do better than end this chapter with a quotation from that happy gifted soul, William Barnes, to whose tuneful genius it was given to voice so really the scenes of this Dorset of ours, which are now passing or have long passed away: 'The cattle 'are on the downs or in the hollows of the hills. 'Here and there are wide beds of fern or breadths 'of gorse, and patches of wild raspberry with 'gleaming sheets of flowers. The swine are roaming 'in the woods and the shady oak-glades, the nuts 'studding the brown-leaved bushes. On the sunny-'side of some cluster of trees is the herdsman's round 'wicker house with its brown conical roof and blue

'wreaths of smoke. In the meadows and basins of 'the sluggish streams stand clustered tall old elms 'waving with nests of herons; the bittern, coot and 'water-rail are busy among the rushes and flags of 'the reedy meres. Birds are "churming" in the 'wood-girt clearings, wolves and foxes slinking to 'their covers, knots of maidens laughing at the 'water-spring, beating the white linen or flannel 'with their washing bats; the children play before 'the doors of the straw-thatched houses of the 'homestead, the peaceful abode of the sons of 'the oaky vale. On the ridges of the Downs rise the 'sharp cones of the barrows....green with the grass 'of long years.'

Dorset with its inhospitable coast, its fenny valleys, and its mighty forest barrier, was no easy country to assail, and it was not till the English got at it from the North that it became part of the West-Saxon land.

CHAPTER IV.

The westward growth of Wessex, including the Conquest of Dorset, down to 705, when Ealdhelm became Bishop of Sherborne.

I MUST endeavour to compress into as short a space as is consistent with clearness the steps, whereby Wessex in the seventh century lost territory on the north but increased in size towards the west, until Ealdhelm's diocese—the diocese of Selwoodshire as it is called by an old English writer—was formed.

In 628 a great Mercian king and warrior, Penda, absorbed into his kingdom those West-Saxons, who towards the end of Ceawlin's career had settled in the lower Severn valley, the men who rebelled against Ceawlin and beat him at Wanborough. Some, who really know this period, doubt whether Penda absorbed these West-Saxons as early as 628, but they would admit that within thirty or forty years afterwards this absorption had

taken place. In my opinion it certainly began in 628 and was complete in no long time.

In 643 Cynegils died and was succeeded by his son Cenwealh. To Cenwealh belongs the glory of wresting from the Welsh what we have called the wedge, the land of Malmesbury; this he succeeded in doing after defeating them at Bradford-on-Avon in 652. This success he followed up in 658 by again defeating them 'æt Peonnum,' 'at the Hills' and driving them to the Parrett.

Now arises for us the very interesting question: Where are the Hills? The usual answer is that the place is Penselwood near Stourhead, where a modern tower on the borders of Wilts, Somerset and Dorset rises high above the surrounding country. And this view is supposed to be confirmed by an entry in the *English Chronicle* under the year 1016, where we get the phrase 'æt Poennan with Gillingaham'; hence, it is argued, the hills alluded to in 658 must be the same as the hills near Gillingham alluded to in 1016! There are hills near Gillingham and there are hills near Sherborne and there are hills in many other places, notably near the Butleigh Monument in Somerset, which would suit equally well. But there are no hills by Penselwood which stand out alone so manifestly as do

Sutton Montis hill and Cadbury by Corton Beacon. There you have your Peonnan; there you have Cadbury, the great fortress which the English stormed before they drove the Welsh to the Parrett; there you have your Sigwell, the well of victory, rightly named from the events of that glorious day. How any one who knows the two sites can hesitate between them, I at any rate do not understand.

But whichever site we choose—and they are not far apart—this at least is certain, that with this victory began the conquest of North Dorset, of the land of Sherborne; to that point we must hold. Thus then by this victory the present county of Somerset as far westward as the Parrett, together with the vale towards the head of which Sherborne lies, and, it may be, the whole of Blackmore, was added to Wessex.

Now followed what might be described by a Frenchman as a period of 'peaceful penetration'; the English gradually pushed onwards up Taunton Vale towards the upper waters of the Exe, and through the land of Crewkerne into the valley of the Axminster Axe. On their left flank lay the bulk of Dorset still in the main Welsh; on their right flank and right front the Quantocks and the wilder region of Exmoor. But Dorset was being gradually cut off from the rest of West Wales, just as some spit of

sand is gradually isolated aud then overwhelmed by the oncoming tide.

Finally in 682 the West-Saxon king, Centwine, as the *English Chronicle* tells us, drove the Welsh to the sea. Here we must ask another question: What sea is it? In connection with this victory William of Malmesbury wrote: 'The North Welsh 'then meditating rebellion, King Centwine thoroughly 'beat them with such heart-breaking slaughter, that 'they had no further hope (of successful rebellion). 'And so the beaten men had to submit to that worst 'of evils, the *tributaria functio,* (*i.e.* to become a 'tributary and subordinate race,) so that those, who 'hitherto were on sufferance in possession of the 'mere shadow of liberty, now were openly groaning 'under the yoke of subjection.' Where William of Malmesbury got his information nobody knows, but it looks like truth. Now comes the question: To whom in this quotation does the term North Welsh apply? It cannot apply to the Welsh of what is now the Principality, though it is their usual name, as opposed to the West Welsh; all admit this. Some writers therefore have applied it to the Welshmen of the Quantocks and Exmoor; but they were known as West Welsh. It is obvious then that there is something wrong about the words 'North Welsh,' or to use William of Malmesbury's own spelling, the 'Norht Walæs.'

I think I know what the error is: the document which William here copied no doubt had the words 'Norht Walæs,' but they are due to the carelessness or ignorance of an earlier scribe, who misread 'Dorn Walæs' or, it may be, 'Thorn Walæs' as 'Norht Walæs.'

Now Dorn Walæs would mean Welshmen of Dorset; so here we have in a nutshell the story of the conquest of the bulk of Dorset. By the advance of the English along the vale of the Axe thence into that of the Otter and over the low-hill ground which separates the vale of the Otter from that of the Exe, the Welsh of Dorset were gradually isolated from their kinsmen in Dumnonia. Finding themselves thus being isolated, they made a final effort in 682 to stem the English flood, which had cut them off and was gradually submerging them. They were badly beaten and driven to the sea. The sea then here meant is the English Channel. And thus partly by way of Honiton partly by way of Taunton Vale, Wellington, and Tiverton, through a process of 'peaceful penetration,' the English won the land of the Exe and its tributaries even before 682, while in that year they became complete masters of Dorset.

This theory is very strikingly supported by the early life of S. Boniface. Winfrith, an Englishman, the apostle of the Germans and first Archbishop of

Maintz, known 'in religion' as Boniface, was born, according to a fourteenth century authority, about the year 680 at Crediton. His life, by his friend and constant companion Willibald, records his education as a boy in the monastery *Adescancastrum*, which surely stands for the old English words 'æt Exancaster,' *i.e.* Exeter. It is pretty clear then, that about 680 the English of Wessex had secured a footing in the land of the Exe. I do not think however that they had as early as this subdued thoroughly the Welsh of the Quantocks and Exmoor; these men were still causing trouble as late as 710, when King Ine of Wessex built the fortress of Taunton with a view to keeping them in order.

This conquest of West Somerset and of Dorset and the land of the Exe was no doubt less of an *exterminating* conquest—to use that word in its literal meaning—than were those conquests of the West-Saxons, which had been made before the year 634; it was probably a good deal gentler than that of 652 or that of 658. For in 634 began the conversion of Wessex to Christianity. The tendency since 634 had been more and more, not to slay the Welsh or drive them clean out of any newly gained territory, but to let them remain, if they wished, in an inferior position. This fact is evident, not only from the history of Exeter, but also from the Laws

of Ine, Ealdhelm's kinsman, King of Wessex from 688 to 728.

I must now pass to another district of Wessex, viz: to that part represented by the modern counties of Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Bucks. In 661, according to the *English Chronicle*, Wulfhere, King of Mercia, Penda's son, defeated West-Saxon Cenwealh at Pontisbury, south-east of Shrewsbury, ravaged Wessex as far as Ashdown, and thence passed southward and took possession of the Isle of Wight; Bede adds that he also seized that part of Wessex called the Meanuari, whose name still survives in the Hundreds of East and West Meon in Hampshire.

These two provinces, as Bede calls them, Wulfhere gave to his friend and ally the South-Saxon King. Bede however tells us that this transfer took place 'not long before' 681. If so, 661 is perhaps too early a date for these events. Be that as it may, this ravaging of northern and eastern Wessex is the first step in the separation from Wessex of the district north of the Thames containing the counties of Oxford, Bedford, and Bucks; it is the beginning of its absorption by Mercia.

Bede tells us that between 663 and 670 Cenwealh frequently suffered great losses at the hands of his

enemies; I think therefore that as early as this the district north of the Thames may fitly be described as debateable ground, sometimes belonging to Mercia sometimes to Wessex, until the time when Offa finally secured it for Mercia by the victory of Benson in 777. The West-Saxon King, Cadwalla, Ine's predecessor, recovered the Isle of Wight for Wessex in 686.

We have thus completed the story of the growth and limits of Wessex down to the time, when Ealdhelm became Bishop of Sherborne.

CHAPTER V.

Ealdhelm's earlier life.

THOUGH we may know, if we choose, a very fair amount about S. Ealdhelm, more a good deal than we can know about S. Swithun, yet it must be confessed that somehow the English world has not taken that interest in him which his career merited. Even in Dorset, where his name deserves special honour, it is evident that he has been too much forgotten.

To the west of the Quarries of Purbeck there projects boldly into the English Channel a headland, rising some 360 feet above its racing tides; below the headland runs out like a giant arm a ridge of perilous rocks. Even to those who dwell near it, this headland is commonly known as S. Alban's Head, but it is really S. Ealdhelm's. That is rather a reproach to Dorset men. Whatever S. Alban's merits may have been, it can hardly be said that Englishmen owe anything to them; but to S. Ealdhelm the debt of the newer Wessex, Somerset, Dorset and Devon, is very great, and we have no right to forget him.

In this age of advanced education, when we cannot expect many to read the *Gesta Pontificum* of William of Malmesbury for themselves, when such, as can do, belong, according to a Birmingham 'Scientist,' to the uneducated class, there is nothing for us but to tell in English the story of Ealdhelm's life once again, much in the same way, as William of Malmesbury has told it in Latin. Though Bede was born not forty years after Ealdhelm, that great historian, writing in the north of England, unfortunately for us, has not told very much about our hero; and we have to depend for the bulk of our material on William of Malmesbury, who wrote 500 years after Ealdhelm's death.

William was a good historian; in the long interval of time between Bede's days and his there is no historian's name which stands higher; and so neglected did he think Ealdhelm had been, that out of the five Books, which his *Gesta Pontificum* contain and which narrate the doings of great English ecclesiastics from the earliest times down to the first quarter of the 12th century, one whole Book is devoted to the Life of S. Ealdhelm.

If then we may trust the Malmesbury writer, Ealdhelm was born in 639 or 640, being the son of Kenten, a near relative of King Ine. He was not the King's nephew, as was stated by Faritius, a distin-

guished ecclesiastic who wrote a life of S. Ealdhelm, still extant, some time before William of Malmesbury wrote his more trustworthy account. Nor was Ealdhelm, as has been suggested, the son of King Centwine (though it is conceivable that Kenten might stand for Centwine); for Ealdhelm mentions King Centwine in his writings, without giving us the slightest hint that the tender tie of father and son existed between them. He mentions him under such circumstances, that, if the tie existed, he must I think have alluded to it, and there is no such allusion. Moreover if he was his son, it seems strange that Ealdhelm should be known to after-times, not as King Centwine's son, but as King Ine's kinsman.

William of Malmesbury tells us that Alfred the Great in his Handbook speaks of Ealdhelm as Ine's kinsman, but he says nothing of his relationship to King Centwine.

We cannot doubt that Sherborne owes its existence to Ine and Ealdhelm; it certainly owes to them its status, as the old cathedral town of the newer Wessex, the metropolis of Wells and Salisbury, of Exeter and Truro.

What the site of Sherborne was like, when the English won it in 658, no man can exactly say; the plain of Oborne and the site of Sherborne Lake

formed a big morass through which the streams from the Seven Sisters and from Bradley Head wandered sluggishly to join just above Sherborne in forming the Yeo; to the west of us lay the moor of Lenthay, to the east and south of us stretched the great forest of Selwood, the haunt of wolves, foxes, badgers, otters, wild swine and deer; and the old trees in Sherborne Castle Park are the representatives of it; the park is a fragment of a real old forest, a real chase, which once extended far and wide. The town and its cathedral stood, as they stand now, on the hillside, on the outskirts of this Chase.

Sherborne had never been a Roman stronghold like Dorchester or Ilchester, nor a Welsh town like Cadbury or Shaftesbury. So far as we can tell, it is, as its name is, purely English.

We cannot doubt that Ealdhelm's Sherborne home stood on the site of the Old Castle, the home for centuries of his successors, the Bishops of Sherborne and Sarum.

Of the birthplace of Ealdhelm and of his boyish life we know nothing; Birinus, a Frank sent to Britain by Pope Honorius with what I may call a roving commission, began his mission in Wessex in 634; it is therefore possible, that Ealdhelm's father and mother were Christians at the time of his birth.

In 652 the land of Malmesbury passed into English hands, but it must not be forgotten that, ever since Ceawlin's victory at Deorham in 577, Malmesbury had been a border town, where English and Welsh dwelt side by side, as is evident from the *Eulogium Historiarum,* a M.S. of the thirteenth century, quoted by Dr. Edwin Guest in the second volume of his *Origines Celticae.* What the Eulogium tells us bears the strongest marks of being based on something like contemporary evidence.

Now as Ealdhelm is generally said to have received his education as a boy at Malmesbury under an Irish scholar called Maildubh or Maildulf or Meldum—to quote only three different forms of his name—it may be interesting to give some account of Malmesbury at the time when Maildubh settled there.

There can be no doubt that in Ealdhelm's lifetime Malmesbury was known to the learned as *Maildufi urbs,* for Bede tells us so. In spite then of the ingenious suggestions of Dr. G. F. Browne, the Bishop of Bristol, I feel no doubt that Malmesbury owes its name, even in its present shape, to this Irish scholar; though this present shape is best explained by the 'contamination' theory of the Rev. Charles Plummer, which is contained in his *Baedae Opera Historica, Tom. II. pp. 310, 311.*

The Eulogium tells us that Maildubh took up his quarters 'under the Castellum of Bladon, which 'in the Saxon tongue is called Ingelbourne Castle.... 'There had formerly been a city there, which was 'totally destroyed by the "alienigeni" (*i.e.* the 'English), but the Castellum being a fortified place 'maintained itself, and stood there a long time..... 'without having any dwelling near it. The King's 'residence and the manor belonging to it were both 'in Pagan and Christian times at Kairdurburgh, 'which is now called Brukeburgh or otherwise 'Brokenberh. The hermit aforesaid by name 'Mailduf selected for himself a hermitage beneath 'the Castellum, having obtained permission from the 'men in charge of it; for there was not much resort 'of people there; and when the necessaries of life 'began to fail him, he collected round him scholars 'to teach, that by their liberality he might mend his 'scanty commons.'

Dr. Guest, commenting on this, points out that, when Maildubh came, he found an English guard posted in the Castellum, which was surrounded by the ruins of Caer Bladon, which is the old name for Malmesbury, the Welsh name: that Caer Bladon still lay waste as the English had left it sixty years or more before, that the brook flowing by neighbouring Brokenborough—which keeps that name to

this day—was known to the Welsh as the Bladon, and to the English as the Ingelbourne; and hence that the castellum built at its junction with the Avon was called by the English Ingelbourne Castle. He further infers that the English sacked Caer Bladon in 577. Ingelbourne, according to Dr. Guest, means the brook of the English.

Thus it would appear that at whatever date Maildubh settled at Caer Bladon, whether before or after 652, the English were his immediate neighbours. Since he would be unlikely to settle there, if the English were still Pagans, we must put the date of his arrival after, and even some time after, 634; but we can say nothing more definite than this about the date; we cannot even say that it must have been earlier than 652, for the garrison may perfectly well have been keeping watch and ward against the Mercians. Indeed, I have a suspicion that this is the real situation, that the West-Saxon garrison is looking northward for attacks from Mercia, not southward for attacks from Welshmen, from whom since 652 there was nothing more to be feared in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury.

The first point we know about the career of Ealdhelm is, that he was sent by his father—not as is generally held to Malmesbury—but to Canterbury, to study under Hadrian, Abbot of the Monastery

dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, commonly known as S. Augustine's. Now Abbot Hadrian did not come to England till the year 670, and he was appointed Abbot of S. Augustine's in 671, so that Ealdhelm must have been thirty-one years of age at least before he went there. This is the reason for the common statement that he owed his earlier education to Maildubh. For this common belief there is no sufficient authority.

It may be urged against me, that Hlothhere, the Bishop of Wessex, in a *Grant* to Ealdhelm, made on the 26th August, 675, describes him as having been brought up 'at Maidulfesberg from the early flower 'of his infancy.' In answer to this I must point out that the *Grant* bears some marks of being a spurious document, and further that Ealdhelm himself, in a letter to Hadrian, describes the Abbot of S. Augustine's as 'the venerable preceptor of my rude 'infancy.' Now since Ealdhelm was at least thirty-one years of age when he came under the instruction of Hadrian, it is clear that the word 'infancy' refers, not to bodily, but to mental infancy in Ealdhelm's letter and probably also therefore in the spurious *Grant* of Hlothhere.

Ealdhelm was probably not more than two years at Canterbury during his first course of study there, after which he entered the brotherhood of

Malmesbury under Maildubh. After a short time he returned to Hadrian's school again, but had soon to leave Canterbury and return to Malmesbury on account of ill health.

If then we accept the date 675—which is usually given, depending though it does on the doubtful *Grant* of Hlothhere—as that at which Ealdhelm succeeded Maildubh as chief of Malmesbury School, it follows that, after 671 and before 675, Ealdhelm and Maildubh were not much together. It is true that an Irishman, who appealed to Ealdhelm to take him as a pupil, believed he had a claim on him, because he, Ealdhelm, was 'nourished by a certain holy man of our race'; but that is literally the only evidence we have, except the spurious grant, for regarding Ealdhelm as a pupil of Maildubh. Still I give it for what it is worth.

If any man cannot see where else in Wessex, except Malmesbury, Ealdhelm could have received his early education, I could suggest Dorchester-on-Thames. I however do not think the claim of Malmesbury improbable; I merely note that there is only one piece of evidence in support of it, and that is a sentence in a letter from an Irishman, who is asking a favour.

CHAPTER VI.

Ealdhelm's later life.

WHEN S. Birinus became Bishop of Wessex in 635, that kingdom consisted of Hants, the bulk of Wilts, Berks, Surrey, Bucks, Oxfordshire and Bedfordshire; but the West-Saxon settlement on the Lower Severn had by this time, I believe, become Mercian.

In 650 S. Birinus died, and Agilberht, a man from Gaul—but I should say from his name a Frank—who had been educated in Ireland, succeeded him.

In 660 King Cenwealh made an attempt to divide the West-Saxon diocese into two parts, by creating a see at Winchester, to which he appointed a somewhat undesirable person called Wine. The story goes that he could not understand the (Frankish ?) talk of Agilberht, who was so offended at this move of Cenwealh's, that he left his diocese and returned to Gaul, where he became Bishop of Paris.

I think however that Cenwealh had perhaps another reason for what he did. The site of Dorchester-on-Thames was by this time in a very critical case; indeed it became, probably as early as 666 or 670, Mercian for a time. Cenwealh therefore wanted to have a West-Saxon bishop, whose seat should be safely West-Saxon; hence his appointment of Wine to Winchester.

Wine however, the undesirable, was driven out of Wessex by the King in 666, and went off to Mercia, and I shall say no more about him; Wessex remained without a bishop till 670, when Hlothhere, Agilberht's nephew, was appointed to the diocese. He died in 676 and was succeeded by Hædde, who definitely made Winchester the seat of the West-Saxon bishopric and removed the body of S. Birinus from Dorchester-on-Thames to the Old Minster, as it was afterwards called, at Winchester.

By 682 this diocese was largely increased in size by the addition to it of the whole of Dorset; West-Somerset too, and the land of the Exe had been added by the process of 'peaceful penetration.' It had now become quite an unwieldly diocese, and there was a strong feeling that it ought to be divided.

In Mercia and in Northumbria, Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury had succeeded in carrying

out the division of unwieldly dioceses; but there is a spurious document, professing to be a decree of Theodore, which lays down that Wessex is not to be divided during Bishop Hædde's lifetime; the date of this spurious document purports to be 679.

The real truth however seems to be that neither Hædde himself nor the West-Saxon King wanted a division at the time when Theodore was mapping out new dioceses elsewhere; for Wessex was then in a critical position, owing both to Mercian aggression and to internal difficulties. But when Hædde died in 705, the division of Wessex into two dioceses was made.

Henceforward there were to be two bishops, one for the older Wessex with his bishop's seat at Winchester, the other for the newer Wessex with his bishop's seat at Sherborne. What the exact boundaries of this new diocese were, I shall now describe.

The bishop chosen to rule the newer Wessex was Abbot Ealdhelm of Malmesbury, who had succeeded Maildubh as chief of the School in 675, if we may accept the date of the spurious *Grant* of Hlothhere. The date is probably about right. Malmesbury, which was not an Abbey under Maildubh, was certainly given that *status* under

Ealdhelm. What then were the limits of the new diocese?

In answering this question we must not allow ourselves, as others have, to be misled by what William of Malmesbury tells us. He declares that, by an unequal and unfair division, only Hants and Surrey were assigned to Winchester, while Sherborne got Wilts, Dorset, Berks, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. And the absurdity of such a division has struck many writers since his time. But Mr. E. A. Freeman pointed out in 1874, in the 'Transac-'tions of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural 'History Society,' that William herein was certainly wrong. The *English Chronicle*, under the year 709, distinctly states that the eastern boundary of Ealdhelm's diocese was Selwood. It follows therefore that all Wiltshire, except the wedge, the land of Malmesbury, and all Berks were out of it, and belonged to Winchester. We can actually point out, how William came to make his mistake; in his own day, in consequence of changes made in 1058, Berks, Wilts, and Dorset were in the same diocese, and he thought that they therefore must have been so in Ealdhelm's day.

But the *English Chronicle* proves to us, that the eastern boundary of Ealdhelm's diocese was the eastern bounday of Selwood, and to that we must

hold. How far west did the diocese extend? William of Malmesbury says, that it went as far west as Cornwall. Here again he is wrong, for we know that a Welsh diocese of Cornwall existed long after Ealdhelm's time. We must therefore regard the western frontier of Wessex at this time as the western frontier of the diocese, that is to say, a line running from the English Channel, somewhat west of the Exe mouth, northward to Exmoor; a line that is, which would form the western boundary of what we have called the land of the Exe. Ealdhelm's diocese therefore consisted of Somerset, Dorset, the land of Malmesbury, and the land of the Exe. This is surely the true account of the matter.

King Ine succeeded to the West-Saxon crown in 688, and with Ealdhelm's help, while Ealdhelm was still Abbot of Malmesbury, he set to work to provide for the spiritual wants of his subjects of the newer Wessex. It was by Ealdhelm's advice that the King restored the monastery of Glastonbury, which had suffered in the English conquest of East Somerset; and Ealdhelm himself not only built two Churches at Malmesbury, one, perhaps two, at Bruton, and one at Wareham where he had an estate, but also founded two monasteries, one at Frome and another at Bradford-on-Avon. The little church of S. Lawrence, which is still standing at Bradford, is almost certainly

the *ecclesiola,* which William of Malmesbury knew and which he believed to be of Ealdhelm's building. He was right, I think, in that belief; we may still see, looking much as it looked 1200 years ago, this little church of S. Lawrence, the most venerable building of its kind that exists in England.

But Ealdhelm's greatest work was his cathedral, which he began at Sherborne after he became bishop. William of Malmesbury saw it, before it gave place to the new Norman church built by Bishop Roger of Sarum, so much of which still remains ; William describes it as being of wonderful construction. Very few of the buildings of Ine's time could have been standing in the days of Henry I; but Ealdhelm's buildings, both at Malmesbury and at Sherborne, escaped rebuilding till then, becanse they were so good. In the days of King Eadgar, Edward the Confessor, and William the Conqueror, many churches were rebuilt, because they were not large enough or fine enough for the growing taste of the times. It was therefore owing to their excellence, their unusual splendour for those early times, that Ealdhelm's buildings were allowed to remain untouched so long. Of Ealdhelm's church at Sherborne nothing, as I have already pointed out, is left except the jambs of a blocked-up doorway at the west end of the north aisle of the nave with doubtless some of the adjoining wall.

Ealdhelm was sixty-six years old when he became bishop, and feeling that his time would be short, he set about his episcopal task with unwearied energy, never losing interest in it, though he was somewhat tired of this world and eagerly longing for the next. Perhaps I may be forgiven for quoting the very words of William of Malmesbury; they are worth it:

> Ista diuinus pontifex indefessus agebat, uicini finis non nescius; sordebant enim iam terrena uiro, inhiabatque caelestibus. Quapropter optimum factu ducebat, si metam uitae talibus praecurreret, quae essent suae laudi memoriae, subiectis emolumento et gratiae. Et licet annis effeta caro labores perferre negaret, tamen solida mens iamque foras eminens, et ipsis caeli ianuis imminens, uincebat temporum situm. Fragilem igitur corporis usum, non longe post desertorem animi, spiritualibus exercitiis subiciebat, in praedicationibus noctes perinde ut dies continuans, dioceses non segniter circuiens, ipse integre et non minus quam in uiridi aetate ieiunia ceteraque id genus bona frequentans. Ducta denique uita hominibus placida, Deo placita, post episcopatus annos quattuor,
>
> Ad superos superum cultor sociusque recessit;
> alterat astra solo, mutat et arua polo:

halitus alta subit, fouet artus hospita tellus,
depositumque suum poscit uterque locus.

Almost on the line which we drew to mark the base of the wedge which the Welsh so stoutly held against the English from 577 to 652, within what was once the northern part of Selwood, there lies a village of the Mendips, two miles or less east of Shepton Mallet. South of it from the slope fall two small streams, which uniting, flow to join the Brue near Castle Cary. There is nothing in this village to make the wayfarer pause or feel that he is treading on holy ground; Doulting is the name of it.

Here 1200 years ago on the 25th May, 705, Ealdhelm closed his victorious career. When the call came to him, he like a good soldier of the great army was in his harness, going round his diocese; he bade those among whom he fell carry him into the little wooden church of the village; and there he died, lying or sitting on a slab of stone which was still to be seen in William of Malmesbury's day. The site of the church in a country place is strangely persistent, even when the church has quite vanished, as is the case at Clifton Maybank, which many Sherborne folk must know. But there is still a Church at Doulting, which is of course far more modern than the stone building, which a monk of Glastonbury, out of gratitude to Ealdhelm for all

he had done for that House, caused to be built in place of the little wooden church. We can hardly doubt that in Doulting church we stand where Ealdhelm died.

The story goes that, when the saint was dead, he appeared in a vision to his friend Ecgwine, Bishop of Worcester, telling him of his death and bidding him come to Doulting. Ecgwine came with speed, and at once set to work making arrangements for carrying his friend's body to Malmesbury. It was born on a bier, with the face apparently uncovered, to the great consolation of the crowd that formed the escort, and of the folk that lined the road, along which the procession passed. Bishop Ecgwine tells us that a space of fifty miles separates Doulting from Malmesbury; as the crow flies, it is rather more than thirty miles. But the procession did not march straight on over hill and dale, it kept to the roads; it halted at night, where shelter and food were to be found. It would doubtless visit places like Frome and Bradford-on-Avon, where Ealdhelm was specially held dear, for they lay more or less on the road, which the procession must naturally take.

There were six halting places on the road; I take this to mean that the march lasted seven days. At each nightly halting place a cross was set up, and a seventh also by the Abbey Church of Malmesbury

itself to mark the end of the journey. The pious work of setting up these crosses was carried out by the care of Ecgwine. In William of Malmesbury's day the crosses were still standing, and time had done them no injury. They are called, he says, 'biscepstane.'

What then was the route of this last march of Ealdhelm? Before I read Dr. G. F. Browne's book, to which I have so often referred, I mapped it out as follows, without attempting to identify each halting place, nor did I think it necessary that these halting places should be exactly seven miles apart; I mapped it out, I say, as follows: Doulting, Frome, Bradford, Melksham, Chippenham, Malmesbury; and I supposed a halt between Frome and Bradford, and between Chippenham and Malmesbury. But since I have read the Bishop of Bristol's book I am persuaded, that he is probably right in holding that the route from Bradford to Malmesbury was, not by Chippenham, but along the Fosse Way.

There is nothing at Malmesbury except the site of the place with its two streams to remind us of Ealdhelm, not even a fragment of building, such as we have at Sherborne. No one really knows the whereabouts of his grave, and indeed his body was translated to a shrine within a century and a half after his death; all we can say is that it was buried

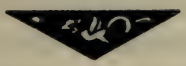
in S. Michael's Church, which he himself had caused to be built. We cannot be sure of the position of the bridge, on which he used to sing to the folk from the country, who hurried away from mass and did not care to listen to sermons; though one somehow imagines that it must have been pretty well on the site of the present bridge, by which wayfarers enter Malmesbury from the south.

When I was at Malmesbury, about Easter 1904, I gathered from a prominent licensed victualler that, though there was no difficulty in working the Education Bill in the town, there was no enthusiasm apparent about Ealdhelm. I felt real pleasure in noting the work of preservation, which has been carried out on the exterior of the west end of the church; but a sensation of lamentation and mourning and woe stole over me, as I looked on the interior of what is still after all a splendid nave. The stilted arches of the ruined transepts are just like those of Sherborne, and they are the work of the same strong genius, Roger, Bishop of Salisbury.

One longs to think that Ealdhelm's body was not chopped up for relics; but I regret to mention that a bone of his left arm was given by Abbot Warin of Malmesbury to our own S. Osmund, the Compiler of the Sarum Missal, the Chief of Sherborne Abbey and School, who placed it in a silver

coffer; here however it was instrumental in healing the infirmities of two archdeacons, so that we may say after all:

Sunt lacrumae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.



CHAPTER VII.

Ealdhelm's miracles.

IT would be absurd in a little book, such as this, to attempt an investigation of mediæval miracles; at the same time it would not be right in dealing with the life of S. Ealdhelm, to omit all mention of those miracles which he is said himself to have wrought during his life-time. Concerning the far more numerous and more striking miracles, which were said to have been wrought by his influence after his death, I shall say nothing.

At the very outset I feel constrained to protest against a view which is sometimes put forward, that mediæval miracles were for the most part due to imposture, though I know that some were. Nor do I in the least understand the historical sense of those who, like a writer whom I have lately been reading, hold 'that the confident belief in the continuance of 'a miraculous power is one of the most difficult 'phenomena of the early Middle Ages.'

Whether miracles are believed or not, depends, it appears to me, on the times and places wherein they occur. Any one who read in the *Century Magazine,* for September 1904, the account by an eye-witness of the canonizing of a man called Seraphim in Russia on the 1st August 1903, and the list of his exploits, will understand what I mean. In times and places where there exists among the people generally no idea of a rational medical science nor a rational view of causation, the belief in miracles is perfectly natural; and it is our duty, in trying to understand S. Ealdhelm's time, to divest ourselves of instinctive habits, which are the result of a purely rational education. S. Ealdhelm had to work miracles, whether he was alive or dead, whether he wished to do so or not, for they were expected of him. Miracles are usually far more the work of the public than of the man to whom they are attributed.

I should not call Bede a credulous man, I should call him a very shrewd, learned, and well-balanced man; William of Malmesbury distinctly disclaims any tendency to believe any miraculous event, unless he can show good cause for believing. Their views may be taken to be the views of at least the average educated Englishman between the eighth and the twelfth century. They both took the

marvels, which they relate, quite seriously; a miracle in their opinion may not be of common occurrence, but they do not feel that there is anything impossible or even improbable in its occurrence. I do not remember that Bede ever states that he himself had seen a miracle wrought, though he had heard of many; William of Malmesbury on the other hand himself saw five miracles performed at S. Ealdhelm's Shrine. All their Bible-study, all their training, the spirit of their time, led them to believe in the possibility, and, under certain circumstances, the likelihood of miracles happening. But no taint of imposture can possibly touch either their names or that of Ealdhelm.

During his life-time our Saint is said to have wrought four miracles: viz. those of the Beam, the Babe, the Broken Altar Slab, and Stopping the Storm; while a fifth miracle, that of the Chasuble, may in a sense be regarded as his. Now William of Malmesbury admits that he has no contemporary written evidence of the truth of these miracles; he points out however that there was, what he considers, an unbroken traditional belief in them, and that they were represented on S. Ealdhelm's shrine within a century and a half after his death; for it was Æthelwulf, King of Wessex from 839 to 856, who set up this shrine, which was still in existence in William of Malmesbury's day.

We shall now take these miracles, one by one, beginning with that of the Beam.

When Ealdhelm was building S. Mary's Church at Malmesbury, and the workmen got as far as the roofing of it, several large beams were being used to carry the roof, which had been supplied at great cost; for they had been brought a long distance. These beams had all been cut to one size, except one which, either through the carelessness of the artificers or, as William prefers to think, through the Divine will that the sanctity of the illustrious builder might shine forth the brighter, was too short. That the beam was too short was discovered by the workmen only at the last moment, just before it was to be hoisted into its place. No extra beam had been provided and to obtain another would mean immense labour. After some discussion they reported the matter to Ealdhelm. He, knowing what an expensive business it would be to get another beam, came, and, praying not aloud but solely with the movement of his lips, with a slight effort of his arms stretched the beam out till it was as long as the others. Then, not wishing to cause any sensation, he gently reproached the workmen for having tried to persuade him into thinking that the beam had been shorter than was necessary. They then measured the beam and found that it was as long as the others; and they rejoiced that they had been

overcome by the virtue of the Saint who was trying to hide his miracle. This beam was twice spared by fire, which destroyed the whole monastery, once in King Alfred's reign and again in King Edward's; but time and decay had destroyed it before William of Malmesbury's day. Such is the legend of the beam, which I have given in an almost literal translation from William's *Gesta Pontificum;* it is not hard to guess how this legend grew. When I was at Malmesbury, I was shewn the beam; and when I ventured to suggest that it had disappeared even before William of Malmesbury's time, and he was older than I am, I was treated as all sceptics deserve to be.

The miracles of the Chasuble, the Babe, and the Broken Altar Slab, are connected with Ealdhelm's visit to Rome, and so also is another miracle which, though it was not in going order, if I may so say, during Ealdhelm's life-time, yet, occurring as it did in Dorset, should have a special interest for Dorset folk. I shall therefore in this one instance break the rule I laid down for myself and deal with a posthumous miracle of Ealdhelm's.

The whole story of the visit to Rome has rather a mythical look; it reads somewhat like other 'Travellers' Tales'; yet there is no denying that the visit took place, for not only do his biographers mention it, but also in a contemporary letter,

addressed to Ealdhelm, occur the words: 'tu Romae aduena fuisti.'

Ealdhelm's object in going to Rome was, according to William of Malmesbury, to secure apostolic privileges for his monasteries of Malmesbury, Bradford and Frome. He communicated his plan to King Ine of Wessex and, what is still more interesting, to King Æthelred of Mercia. Both Kings consenting to his plan, he started off for Wareham whence he intended to sail for Gaul. Near Wareham he had an estate, and, while he was waiting there for a favourable breeze, he caused a church to be built of stone, wherein he might pray to God for a safe outward journey and return. The masonry of this building was still standing when William wrote, but the roof was gone, all but a small portion which projected over the altar and protected the sacred slab from being defiled by birds. Now the miracle was this, that no matter how fiercely a storm of rain might be raging overhead, not a drop ever fell within the walls of this all but roofless Church. In the neighbourhood of Wareham people had got so used to this, that they had ceased to regard it as a miracle. Not to believe it was a mark of great impudence, when every shepherd could bear witness to its truth. The chief men of Dorset had from time to time tried to reconstruct the roof, but had always failed, so that now they had ceased to try.

Thus runs the legend, and there is added in William's own hand in the M.S. which he himself wrote and which still exists these words: 'Locus est 'in Dorsetensi pago ii milibus a mari disparatus, 'iuxta Werham, ubi et Corf Castellum pelago prominet.' I take this to mean, that the site of this church is in Dorset near Wareham two miles from the sea,—*i.e.* the inlet of Poole Harbour,—and that Corfe Castle is in the same neighbourhood; not that the site of the church is at Corfe Castle. That William should mention Corfe, when he mentions Wareham, is quite natural; for the position of Corfe is so striking that, it seems to me, the two places must be closely associated in the mind of anyone, who usually approaches them from any side but that of Purbeck. I do not think that we can identify the site of Ealdhelm's church, but I am quite sure that it was not in Corfe Castle as has been suggested. It would take the shepherds too long to get there for shelter. Other shelter would be handier.

Now we come to the miracle of the Chasuble—S. Ealdhelm, after apparently a somewhat lengthy stay at Wareham, set off for Rome. The Pope at this time was Sergius, who ruled from 687 to 701, and the spurious bull of his, which Ealdhelm was said to have brought back with him from Rome, purports to be dated 701; so that we may fairly assume the date of Ealdhelm's visit to be about 700.

The Pope gave Ealdhelm a very kindly welcome and lodged him in the Vatican, being charmed with his goodness and learning. No day passed without Ealdhelm duly singing his mass; and so it happened that on one occasion, when the mass was over, he pulled off and tossed behind him the vestment they call a Chasuble,—uestem quam casulam nominant,—expecting that the minister or server would be at hand as usual to catch it. The server was at another part of the altar, looking at something or other; but 'He that watches over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps,' and forthwith a sunbeam struck sharp and straight through the glass of a window, and placing itself under the chasuble held it suspended at some considerable distance from the ground. It is not clear whether the Saint brought this chasuble from England or borrowed it in Rome for his use there. Anyhow, the chasuble was still at Malmesbury in William's day, where it was kept with great care. The thread, of which it was woven, was most delicate; it was dyed scarlet and had small black circles embroidered on it, containing representations of peacocks. The size of the chasuble proved, that Ealdhelm, though not 'a mass of a man,' was of dignified height.

Now we come to the Miracle of the Babe—During Ealdhelm's stay in Rome a boy was born in the house of a chamberlain of the Pope. The scan-

dalous report got about that the father of the child was the Pope, and a nun its mother; now the Pope was an excellent man in every way, but he was not popular in Rome at that time, and Ealdhelm remonstrated with the people in vain. To put a stop therefore to this scandal Ealdhelm suggested, that the child should be brought to him, that out of its own mouth it might clear the Supreme Pontiff of the charge. There were some who laughed at this suggestion; nevertheless the child was brought; it was barely nine days old and had not been baptised. Ealdhelm baptised it and then publicly demanded of it, whether the common talk about the Pope being its father was true. The infant replied in the most absolute way, that Sergius was holy and unspotted. Ealdhelm was then requested to discover who the real father was; but this he refused to do, declaring that it was his work to free, if he could, the innocent from condemnation, not to bring death on the guilty. Pope Sergius is said to have granted all Ealdhelm's requests as to apostolic privileges, and no wonder he did. Such is the legend of the Babe.

Now we come to the Miracle of the Broken Altar Slab—Ealdhelm, having got what he came for, started home with his Bull and all sorts of precious foreign merchandise, among which was an altar-slab of splendid white marble, one-and-a-half feet thick, four feet long, and three palms broad, with a

projecting lip, and having crosses beautifully worked all round the edge. It was carried by a camel as far as the Alps, for no animal of our country could have borne the weight of it. Here the camel, or whatever quadruped it was—for, says William, it does not matter what sort of a beast carried it—either because it felt hurt at the weight of its burden, or because of the steepness of the road, fell down. The crash of the fall smashed the camel and broke the slab in two ; the saint, with a secret murmur of the heart and hand outstretched in blessing, repaired both the smashed camel and the broken slab. The fracture of the stone was not a straight fracture, and, that the memory of the miracle might never pass away, the scar of it was still to be seen in William's day. Ealdhelm on landing in England had, what would now be called, a magnificent reception; the 'religious' greeted him, some with sweet singing, others with censers of sweet incense, while the cross was borne before him. The laity too was not behind hand; in describing their joy William quotes Vergil:

pars pedibus plaudunt choreas,

while others shewed the joy that was in them by various bodily gestures. All in common praised God for bringing Ealdhelm, 'the light of Britain,' back. Ealdhelm gave the altar-slab to King Ine, who placed it in the church of S. Mary at Bruton,

where there was also a church of S. Peter, said to have been founded by Ealdhelm.

Now we come to the last Miracle, the Stopping of the Storm—When Ealdhelm had been chosen Bishop of Sherborne in 705, he went to Canterbury to be consecrated by his old friend Archbishop Berhtwald, with whom he had trod the paths of learning and religion. While he was on this visit to Canterbury, Ealdhelm went to Dover hearing that some ships from Gaul had put in there. We may imagine a sort of 'Pack Monday' Fair being held there on this occasion. The Saint was walking by the sea, keeping a sharp look out in case the mariners from Gaul had brought with them anything, which might be of use for his church—surely in this case the church which he was going to build at Sherborne. Now the mariners from Gaul used to bring, among other treasures, books; and Ealdhelm noticed a copy of the Old and New Testaments among their wares. Knowing what he was about, he began to turn over the leaves and tried to beat down the price amid the caustic remarks of the vendors. 'Why should he,' they said, 'thus depreciate other people's wares? Let him puff his own if he liked, and leave the price of other people's alone.' To the insolence of their words Ealdhem replied with a smile only; but as he still haggled over the price, they drove him off, and slackening their ropes they let their vessel fall off a

little from the shore. Straightway a hurricane arose—an offshore squall—which is painted in the most vigorous hues by William of Malmesbury. The ropes cracked, the yardarm could not stand the fury of the tempest, the ship's side was being smashed, they were going to founder. The mariners perceived that this was their punishment for the way in which they had treated the Saint; they cried to him for help and on their kness, as William tells us in the words of Vergil,

tendunt ad litora palmas.

They promised that they would never do it again. The blessed bishop, who had felt no irritation at their insolence, readily forgave their fault, and with the sign of the cross he stilled the storm. The ship was again hauled to the shore; and Ealdhelm at the urgent request of the penitents became possessor of the book. They begged him to take it for nothing; but he did not want them to lose by their penitence, at the same time he would not repudiate their prayers. So he gave them a price halfway between what they had originally asked and what he had intended to give. This ancient book was still to be seen in William's day, not, as one had fondly hoped, at Sherborne, but at Malmesbury.

After reading this story one naturally longs to ask some questions: *(a)* Did this episode or

something like it ever happen? I think it did. *(b)* What did Ealdhelm pay for the book? Alas! we can never know that. *(c)* If it did happen, did Ealdhelm really think, that he had anything to do with the stopping of the storm? I think that he may have really thought so. He believed he had the best authority for holding, that a servant of God could at times command the elements and control the physical world, just as John Wesley believed.

SEAL OF JOHN OF STALBRIDGE
(JOHANNES DE STAPELBRIGGE),
ABBOT OF SHERBORNE, 1285–1310.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ealdhelm as a teacher and literary man. His letter to Acircius.

I HAVE at last come to what is to me, the most interesting side of Ealdhelm's life, I mean the work he did for Wessex as a teacher; with that of course is connected most closely his literary career.

By a teacher I do not mean a writer on education or a preacher, though Ealdhelm was both; much less do I mean an 'educationist,' a man who writes to the 'Papers' to tell teachers 'What they ought to do'; I mean one who has really known the joys and drudgeries of teaching.

Now if any one were to do me the honour to ask me, who was the first Headmaster of Sherborne School, I should not hesitate to answer, S. Ealdhelm. He had been a teacher most of his life, he was starting at Sherborne a new centre of religion and learning, for the English of the newer Wessex;

teachers were not too common then, as indeed they are not too common now, perhaps in consequence of the somewhat unnecessary abundance of 'educationists.' To tell me that Ealdhelm, who possessed not only the powers but also the foibles which a teacher is almost bound to develope, could start a school—a bishop's school—without himself taking some part in the teaching while he was at Sherborne, and acting as the head of it, as the man who directed its methods and started it on its long and honourable career, is to tell me something which I cannot accept as likely.

The seventh century of our era was a period of the utmost importance in English history; it is the age of the conversion of our own people to Christianity, and their introduction to literature and intellectual training. This age begins with S. Augustine and ends with Bede; Bede is indeed a marvellous man, in him it culminates. But what would Bede have been without the giants that preceded him?

Important though Augustine's mission to Kent was, it can scarcely be called successful; little progress was made. Forty years afterwards came a second Roman mission to Wessex, that of Birinus; here too good work was done, more successful perhaps than Augustine's. But the new knowledge had

still to struggle for existence. We must not forget however that this knowledge reached the English from two different sources; in the south of England it came mainly from Rome and Gaul, in the north mainly from Iona and Ireland. These two forms of Christian teaching and discipline were not identical; and the question arose, which was to prevail.

One point specially to be noted is this, that the English Church was in no sense a development from the Welsh; indeed long after the English conversion was completed the Welsh Christians held aloof from the 'Saxon' Christians; it was not till 777 that these Welshmen conformed to the 'Catholic Easter,' and it was only gradually in the course of the following centuries, that they entered into fellowship with the younger and stronger church.

The struggle in the north of England between the Irish and the Roman systems was keen and pathetic; but the Roman won, as indeed it deserved to win, and thus England, instead of remaining isolated in religion and ideas, was, both for good and for evil, brought within the influence of the great Roman or Western system. I do not think that anyone, who has studied the course of these events, can feel anything but thankfulness that such was the result.

Now among the great men, to whom we owe this result, there is one whose name deserves to be held in peculiar honour by us, as a pioneer in literature and education, a valiant champion of the Roman, as opposed to the Keltic, form of Christianity, the first Englishman to open up to his countrymen the intelligent study of Latin literature, Ealdhelm of Malmesbury and Sherborne. Referring to his studies Ealdhelm writes in his *Letter to Acircius* to this effect:

'I feel sure,' he says, 'that no man of our 'race nurtured in the cradle of the German 'stock has, earlier than my humble self, worked 'so hard at this subject as I have..... For 'saying this I do not think that I deserve to be 'wounded by the shafts of supercilious criti- 'cism....if relying on the Lord I boast some- 'what of the gratuitous grace of that divine gift '(mental power), which is conferred on each of 'us, not through the prerogative of previous 'merit, but by the munificence of heavenly 'goodness. I may make concerning myself that 'boast, which the illustrious Vergil made:

'Yea, I shall be the first, so life endures,
'To lead the Muses with me, as I pass
'To mine own country from the Aonian height;
'I, Mantua, first will bring thee back the palms
'Of Idumea.'

'and farther on the same poet writes:

'I love

'To walk the heights, from whence no earlier track

'Slopes gently downward to Castalia's spring.'

It is worth mentioning here, that William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Pontificum* quotes a less exuberant version of this passage. Can it be that Ealdhelm himself made the alteration, and that we have the good fortune to possess two versions of his claim to be the first English student of Latin poetry, each written by himself?

There were two systems of education at this time in England, the Canterbury system and the Irish system. Of the Canterbury system the great founders and exponents were Abbot Hadrian of S. Augustine's and Archbishop Theodore; Ealdhelm was an ardent disciple of these teachers and thought little of the Irish scholars, such as Maildubh for instance, his own predecessor in the headmastership of the Malmesbury School. This point he makes very prominent in his *Letter to Eafrith,* an old pupil of his, who had just returned from a period of six years' study in Ireland. Ealdhelm cannot understand why Englishmen should go to Ireland for instruction, when they can get taught so much better at Canterbury, and he goes on to complain of the

uproarious conduct of those Irish students 'Scotici Scioli,' who occasionally came to Canterbury, and tells how Archbishop Theodore got the better of them.

Nevertheless Ealdhelm had many admirers among the Irish scholars; Artwil, the accomplished son of an Irish King, submitted to him all his numerous literary compositions, in order that Ealdhelm 'by the file of his perfect genius might rub off their Irish roughness.' Even from the land of the Franks, even from Peronne, where the Irish saint and scholar Furseus, who had for some time taught in East Anglia, was buried, a letter came to Ealdhelm from another Irish scholar and exile Cellanus, who thus addressed him:

'To my Lord, richly gifted with literary tastes and 'adorned with mellifluous and elegant lucubrations, 'to Ealdhelm the Abbot who is marvellously acquir-'ing in the land of the 'Saxons' what some scarce 'win by labour and sweat in foreign air, Cellanus a 'native of Ireland, an exile now hiding in the furthest 'corner of the territory of the Franks, a mean and 'very humble servant of a famous Christian colony, 'wishes health in the entire and protecting Trinity.'

Cellanus then proceeds to ask Ealdhelm to lend him some sermons. William of Malmesbury gives us a short extract from Ealdhelm's answer:

'I am surprised that, from the famous country of 'the Franks where literature flourishes, you my 'brother, a man of fruitful industry, address one so 'insignificant as myself, who come of the Saxon stock, 'and from my tender infancy have been brought up 'under the northern sky.'

Another Irishman, 'ignoti nominis,' of no reputation, as he describes himself, writes to Ealdhelm, begging him to take him as a pupil, because he would rather learn Latin and Greek from Ealdhelm than from anyone else. He begs Ealdhelm to lend him a book, and sends him some rather good Latin hexameters to examine; he finishes his letter by expressing the hope that Ealdhelm will have the protection of the Divine Grace, so long as he prays for him. In this letter we have what may be an allusion to Maildubh as I have already noted, for this Irishman gives as a reason why Ealdhelm should take him as a pupil the fact that he, Ealdhelm, was himself nourished by an Irish scholar. We have two letters of Ealdhelm's to old pupils, Æthelwald and Wihtfrith, whose name is by mistake printed *Wilfrid* in Migne's *Patrologiae Cursus Completus;* both these letters contain good advice as to study and behaviour. It is curious that one form of dissipation, against which Æthelwald is warned, is too much horse-exercise—'equitandi uagatio culpabilis'; it surely cannot refer to trespassing!

Ealdhelm's great work, however, on education is his *Letter to Acircius*, otherwise described as a '*Treatise on the number Seven, on Metres, Riddles and Rules of Metrical Feet.*' It consists of about seventy-nine pages of fifty-nine lines each. This work is addressed to an old pupil and friend of twenty years standing, the famous Scholar-King of Northumbria, Ealdfrith.

Why Ealdhelm calls him Acircius, I cannot discover; Bede, who knew Ealdfrith well and recognised this letter as addressed to him, does not tell us. What the meaning of the name Acircius is, I cannot discover. Ealdfrith was a great friend of S. Cuthbert, and well acquainted with, though not so friendly towards S. Wilfrid, to whom, in spite of his antagonism to Archbishop Theodore's views about the division of the northern dioceses, the church in the north of England owed a heavy debt of gratitude.

The salutation at the beginning of the work describes Ealdfrith as the most illustrious and glorious Acircius, knit long ago to Ealdhelm by the bonds which join faithful master and pupil, the wielder of the sceptre of the northern empire. Ealdhelm reminds his pupil how twenty years ago, when Ealdfrith was confirmed by the bishop, he, Ealdhelm, took him for his adopted son. Allusion is of course made to the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit

and to the seven sacraments, and then Ealdhelm plunges into his discussion of the importance of the number Seven; for Ealdhelm was an astrologer among his other accomplishments and could cast horoscopes, as he hints in a letter which he writes to Bishop Hædde of Wessex. He goes through the records of the Old and New Testament to shew the importance of this number, and the results of this investigation are more curious than instructive. He points out however, what I dare say every one has not noted, that there are seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, and eleven times seven generations in the pedigree of Jesus, as given by S. Luke.

Having dealt with the importance of the number Seven, Ealdhelm returns to the old ties of affection, which bind him and Ealdfrith together, but he now treats them as ties of fraternity, whereas before he spoke of himself as 'adopted father.' He hopes that their long absence from one another has caused no loosing of these ties; so far as he himself is concerned, he thinks that the reverse is the case.

He then makes reference to the poet Symphosius, who was famous for his poetic riddles, one hundred and five in number, of three lines each; Ealdhelm proposes to send Ealdfrith some similar riddles, which are to consist of four, five, six, seven, and even more lines each. These shall be in

hexameter verse, and shall illustrate his views on that metre. In these riddles he will represent inanimate things as talking, but this is surely quite permissible, seeing that in the Bible vines, fig-trees, thistles and other such things are represented as speaking, while rivers clap their hands.

First then he will deal with the 'Schemes' or shapes which metres may take; such a course is necessary, for, though inspiration makes a poet, a study of metrical laws is required for a critical estimate of poetry.

There are twenty eight legitimate metrical feet, with which he will deal one by one later; from these feet arise eight *genera* and about one hundred *species* of metres. These he will explain in accordance with the principles put forward by previous grammarians, but with fuller illustrations. Syllables may be of three quantities long, short or common, and hence arise the different schemes of metres.

Every sort of hexameter verse rests on this threefold division of the quantity of syllables, and the influence of synaloepha must be carefully noted; this he explains and illustrates by several instances, e.g. from Juvenal, xiii. 118,

Omenta ut uideo nullum discrimen habendum est.

It is scanned thus: *omen* spondee, *tut uide* dactyl by synaloepha, *o nul* spondee, *lum dis* spondee, *crimen ha* dactyl, *bend est* spondee by synaloepha.

He then draws a distinction, which we now-a-days do not observe, between synaloepha and eclipsis—each of which he calls a metaplasm. If, when two vowels come together, the former is exploded, you have synaloepha; if the latter, eclipsis. I believe that Ealdhelm here wrote ecthlipsis, but Migne's text reads eclipsis. According to him the following line from Vergil A. vii. 123, contains two synaloephae and one eclipsis:

Nunc repeto, Anchises fatorum arcana reliquit.

Here we fail to follow him, for there are only two elisions in the verse, and either there are two synaloephae or one synaloepha and one eclipsis.

Having now made clear what would otherwise be a disturbing influence in scansion, he proceeds to discuss the hexameter line, and he thinks the discussion will be clearer, if he, following the example of the blessed Augustine in his Treatise on Free Will and other works, throws his treatise also into the shape of a Catechism, in which the pupil, marked D (discipulus), asks the questions, and the master, marked M (magister), answers them.

D. How many *genera* of verses are there in dactylic metre?—M. Five.—D. Tell me their names.—M. Hexameter, Pentameter, Tetrameter, Trimeter and Dimeter.—D. Of what feet does the dactylic metre consist?—M. Of dactyls and spondees.—D. If so, why do some verses end in a trochee?—M. Because the last syllable is common or indifferent; nevertheless a hexameter should consist of twenty-four *tempora,* since each foot contains four *tempora* or beats; for a short syllable equals one beat and a long syllable two. Therefore a hexameter which ends in a trochee is a *versus colophos.*

And so the Catechism goes on; the master points out that you can say either *hexametrus* or *hexameter,* the former is the Greek form, the latter the Latin. A hexameter verse may consist of six spondees, as for instance,

Hi producuntur legati Minturnenses.

Such a verse is called a spondiazon, nevertheless the metre is dactylic, because lines of this sort only occur in what we call dactylic metre.

The fifth foot of the verse should always be a dactyl, for a line is heavy, which has a spondee in the fifth foot, as for instance in Vergil A vii. 634,

Aut leues ocreas lento ducunt argento.

So therefore we may lay down the general rule that the fifth foot must always be a dactyl, the sixth a spondee, and the first four either dactyls or spondees.

A hexameter may contain any number of syllables from twelve up to seventeen. Verses will be found however containing eighteen, nineteen and even twenty syllables, as for instance in Vergil A vi. 128.

Sed reuocare gradum superasque euadere ad auras,

but we must remember that syllables, which suffer the metaplasmus of synaloepha, are never reckoned.

A verse of twelve syllables would consist of spondees only, a verse of thirteen would contain one dactyl and five spondees and so on, till we come to a verse of seventeen syllables, which would contain five dactyls and one spondee. There are then in all thirty-two *Schemata* of dactylic hexameter verse; in a twelve syllable verse one scheme, in a thirteen syllable verse five schemes; in a fourteen syllable verse ten schemes, for the two dactyls may be in the first and second feet, or in the first and third, or in the first and fourth, or in the first and fifth, or in the second and third, or in the second and fourth, or in the second and fifth, or in the third and fourth, or in the third and fifth, or in the fourth and fifth. But really only four of these are admiss-

ible, namely those in which a dactyl occurs in the fifth foot.

He goes through all these possible schemes, and, as any one who knows the hexameter metre will easily see, he shews that these possible schemes are thirty-two in number but only seventeen are admissible.

The pupil then asks, why the sixth foot is never a dactyl? And he is told that it can be so, but not in a verse in which all the other feet are dactyls, as for instance in Vergil G. iii. 449

Aut spumas miscent argenti uiuaque sulpura,

but he adds that some by a slight change make this verse correct by reading *et sulpura uiua* for *uiuaque sulpura.* Again in Vergil A vi. 33 we find

Bis patriae cecidere manus quin protinus omnia.

Here he says that some regard *omnia* as a spondee by synaloepha, but this he will not accept; *omnia* in Vergil is, he declares, always a dactyl, as for instance *omnia fert aetas, omnia uincit amor.* It never occurs to Ealdhelm that *i* in *omnia* might occasionally have the *y* sound. Ealdhelm says nothing about hypermeter.

He next points out that there are four kinds of caesura in hexameter verse; thus we get the *uersus districtus, diuisus, mistus* and *priapeius.* In a *versus districtus,* the words do not coincide with the feet, as for instance in Symphosius,

Dulcis odor nemoris, flamma fumoque fatigor.

In a *versus diuisus* the words coincide with the feet, as for instance

Dic mihi, Clio, quisnam primus fingere uersus,

but a hexameter verse demands that there should be a penthemimeral or a hephthemimeral caesura, therefore such a verse is inadmissible. In a *versus mistus* part is *districtus* and part *diuisus.* This he illustrates by quoting a line of his own,

Petrus Apostolicae qui culmina praesidet arcis,

It is scanned thus: *Petrus Ap, ostoli, cae qui;* here you have the *districtus; culmina, praesidet, arcis;* here you have the *diuisus.* The priapeian caesura is a caesura between the first three and the last three feet of a verse, for instance in Vergil Ecl. vi. 66,

Vt puero Phoebi chorus | assurrexerit omnis.

It is called priapeian, because many verses of this sort have been made in honour of Priapus, *i.e.* such a rhythm is suitable for Bucolic verse.

There are six πάθη or *passiones* in dactylic hexameter verse, viz. *acephalon, procephalon, lagaron, procylon, dulicheron, miuron* or *spicodium.* An *acephalon* is a verse without a head, *i.e.* a verse beginning with a short syllable as for instance in Vergil A i. 2.

Italiam fato profugus.

Here by a barbarism the poet admits a tribrach for a dactyl. I need not comment on this, for every school boy knows what to say about it. The pupil now says that he will not trouble Ealdhelm to discuss all the *passiones,* but asks to be informed about the *miuron* or *spicodium.* The master tells him that *miuron* comes from the Greek word for a mouse, in Latin *mus* or *sorex;* from this word we get, he says, a derivative *miurus i.e. miurinus* (mouselike). Here Ealdhelm has gone far astray, for *miurus* is the Greek μείουρος, *i.e.* curtailed; the term was applied by the Greeks to a hexameter, in which the first syllable of the fifth or sixth foot is short. The pupil then learns that *spicodium* is derived from the Greek word for a wasp, hence comes *spicodis* (wasp-like); a versus *miurus* and *spicodis* are the same, he says, because both wasps and mice have a slender and graceful termination, for he adds a verse so called ends in a pyrrhic. Here again Ealdhelm is wrong; a *spicodis* is described by Greek grammarians as a wasp-waisted verse, *i.e.* a verse with a short syllable,

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where there should be a long syllable, in the middle as in Hom. Il. ii. 731 and in Od. x. 60. The truth is that Ealdhelm has got into a muddle here, for a lagaron and a spicode are the same, *i.e.* they both have a short syllable where they should have a long one in the second, third or fourth foot, while an acephalon has this short syllable in the first foot, and a miuron in the fifth or sixth.

Ealdhelm does not explain the terms lagaron, procylum, procephalon, dulichaeon; nor need we.

The master then defines penthemimeral or semiquinarian caesura as occurring when after two feet a syllable follows which terminates a word, as for instance,

Truncum | terra te | git.

The hephthemimeral occurs, when after three feet a syllable follows and terminates a word, as for instance,

Musa mi | hi cau | sas memo | ra.

The tritotrochaic caesura occurs, when the third foot is a dactyl and ends a word, as for instance,

Hoc uolo | nec leui | ter mihi | syllaba prima legatur.

The tetartitrochaic or tetartebucolic caesura occurs, when there is a caesura at the end of the fourth foot

and that foot is a dactyl, as for instance in Vergil Ec. i. 3,

Nos patri | ae fi | nes et | dulcia | linquimus arua.

This caesura is particularly common in Bucolic verse, but the pupil must note that Vergil in his Bucolics does not generally observe it, for that would increase very considerably the difficulty of versification.

The pupil now suggests that it is time to have some riddles, and the master says 'certainly.'

Here follows the *Aenigmatum Liber,* which consists of a Prologue, nineteen riddles of four lines each, fifteen of five lines each, seventeen of six, nineteen of seven, ten of eight, eleven of nine, four of ten, four of eleven lines each, one of twelve lines, one of thirteen, one of fifteen, one of sixteen and one of eighty three lines; to which are added in the *Paris Codex* of Ealdhelm's works five lines which have no business there. We have therefore one hundred and four riddles, consisting, exclusive of the prologue, of seven hundred and eighty eight hexameter lines. The prologue is made up as follows: first we have the line,

Aldhelmus cecinit millenis uersibus odas;

next follow thirty six lines, each of which begins and ends with the successive letters of this key-line;

thus the first line of these thirty six begins and ends with A,

A rbiter, aetherio iugiter qui regmine sceptr A;

the second begins and ends with L, the last begins and ends with S. These thirty six lines are hard to translate, they consist of an appeal to the Deity to grant Ealdhelm help in his task.

I now propose to give a dozen of these riddles as specimens of Ealdhelm's work in this form of literature. Where I have borrowed a version, I have stated this; in other cases the versions are my own, and I crave forgiveness for daring to print them.

Once was I water, full of scaly fish;
My nature changed, by changed decree of fate;
I suffered torments torrid by the flames;
My face now shines like whitest ash or snow.
(Dr. G. F. Browne.)

The answer is *salt,* as produced by boiling sea-water.

Forth from the fruitful turf I spring unsown,
My head gleams yellow with its shining flower;
At eve I shut, at sunrise ope again;
Hence the wise Greeks have given my name to me.

The answer is *sunflower,* the Greek *heliotropion.*

Though the war trumpet bray with hollow brass,
The lutes throb sweetly and the bugles call,
My inward parts give forth a hundred notes,
And, when I roar, men hear no other sound.

The answer is an *organ.*

Of furrrowed body and blue steel am I,
By rubbing I the shapeless metal form,
Gold I can polish and make rough things smooth;
I have no voice, yet can I chatter well,
And with hoarse screeching raise a hideous din.

The answer is a *file.*

The force of nature, nay the Lord himself,
Gave me a power the old world never knew;
I can suspend in air an iron bar,
And so undo the iron laws of fate;
But Cyprian *adamas* cancels all my powers.

The answer is a *magnet.* What Cyprian *adamas* is, I do not know.

My coat is black and made of wrinkled bark,
And yet within I have a marrow white;
At royal dinners, in the soup and stews
And other meats I play a proper part.
But still no virtue would you find in me,
Were not my inside pounded very fine.

The answer is *Pepper.*

Of willow wood and tough bull-hide am I,
And I can stand the shrewdest knocks of war;
With my own frame I guard my warrior's frame
And shield him from death's grip. Who like
myself
Has felt as oft the deadly blows of war
And known as many wounds, a soldier bold?

The answer is a *shield.*

From the cold body of the earth I came,
Not from the fleece of any woolly fold.
No yarn was spun for me nor whistling thread,
No silk-worm wove me from his yellow store,
No shuttle held me nor the weaver's comb
Passed through me, and yet, garment as I am,
I fear no arrow from a quiver drawn.

The answer is a *corselet.*

Twin sisters we, that share a common lot,
And by our labour furnish food for all;
Equal our toil, unequal is our task,
One sister runs, the other never moves;
And yet we feel no envy, each for each.
Both chew our food, but it we never swallow,
We break it up and give it freely back.

The answer is a *pair of millstones.*

A faithful guard I watchful keep the house,
In gloomy night I walk the dusky shades,

Scarce lose the sight of eyes in darkest caves.
For hated foes, who waste the heaps of corn,
I silent plan the crafty means of death.
On hunting bound I search the wild things' dens.
Not I with dogs will hunt the flying crowds,
For barking dogs wage cruel wars on me;
To hated race it is I owe my name.

(Dr. G. F. Browne).

The answer is a *cat* or *mouser.*

From cracks of stone I came in molten flood,
While flames were shattering the rocky core,
And the loud-roaring furnace brightly glowed.
Now clear as ice am I, capacious too,
And very brittle; men might break my neck,
Taking my slippery body in their hands.
Yet wits I alter, when I kiss men's lips,
And fill their cheeks with bacchic sweets, and make
Their tottering footsteps bring them to the ground.

The answer is a *glass drinking-cup.*

High on the cliffs that front the thunderous seas,
While the salt surf goes whistling down the breeze,
Upreared was I, solid in mighty mass,
To show the sea-ways to the ships that pass.

I never stirred with oars the watery plain,
I never ploughed with sinuous share the main,
And yet by signal from my lofty scaur
I guide the wave-tossed wanderers to the shore;
While murky clouds blot out the stars of night,
Flaming afar I stand a tower of light.

The answer is a *Lighthouse*. S. Ealdhelm's (Alban's) Head may have had one in those old days.

The pupil now asks the master to explain to him the rules of metrical feet. To this the master replies, that there are altogether one hundred and twenty-four possible feet, but only twenty-eight need be dealt with, for it is not necessary to deal with feet of more than four syllables.

Of two syllables there are four kinds of feet, the pyrrhic ∪∪, the iambus ∪—, the trochee —∪, and the spondee — —; of three syllables there are eight kinds of feet, the tribrach ∪∪∪, the molossus — — —, the anapaest ∪∪—, the dactyl —∪∪, the amphibrach ∪—∪, the amphimacer —∪—, the bacchius ∪— —, and the palimbacchius — —∪; of four syllables there are sixteen feet, the proceleusmatic ∪∪∪∪, the dispondee — — — —, the diiambus ∪—∪—, the ditrochee —∪—∪, the antispast ∪ — —∪, the choriambus —∪∪—, the ionic minor ∪∪— —, the ionic maior — —∪∪, the paeon primus —∪∪∪, the paeon secundus ∪—∪∪, the paeon

tertius ∪∪—∪, the paeon quartus ∪∪∪—, the epitritus primus ∪———, the epitritus secundus —∪——, the epitritus tertius ——∪—, and the epitritus quartus ———∪. The pupil then asks, how many feet besides do rhetoricians recognise for prose-writing; the master answers, ninety-six, which are called by the Greeks synzygiae; of five syllables thirty-two feet are formed, and of six syllables sixty-four.

There are seven *accidentia* of feet, viz. arsis and thesis, number of syllables, time of syllables, resolution, figure, and measure. The distinction between arsis and thesis is given; next we are told that feet are in themselves either equal, double or sescuple. A pyrrhic is an equal foot, so is a spondee, because one half equals the other; an iambus is a double foot, because one half is double the other; a bacchius is a sescuple foot, because one half is one and a half times the other. The twenty-eight feet are now treated one by one; a great amount of grammatical lore is shown; we are told into what feet the terminations of the various moods and tenses fall, how the student must note certain changes of quantity, as for instance *sedeo* with short *e*, *sedi* with long *e*, and the like; he is warned to distinguish between *liquor* with short *i*, and *liquor* with long *i*, and similar instances. Impersonal verbs are called by Ealdhelm *uerba defectiua;* he warns his pupil

not to confuse *carex* (sedge or rushes) with *carica* (a dried fig), as a certain writer did, who told how a hermit in the east sustained his exhausted and emaciated limbs by eating five rushes a day, as though he were a fasting ox or stag, while all the time he really meant that this poor man lived on five dried figs.

In dealing with the word *coniunx* he notes, that the letter *n* is present only in the nominative and vocative singular, and he mentions that he has discussed this matter in the Sixth Book of his Treatise *De Nomine*—a book no longer extant. He notices the relation between such forms as *lateo* and *latesco*. He quotes a line from the Paedagogus of Vergil,

Reddetur titulus purpureusque nitor,

and warns his pupil not to confuse *nitor* with short *i* and *nitor* with long *i*. He declares that the accent of a tribrach is paroxytone, and that *igitur* must therefore be pronounced with an acute accent on the second syllable; he marks *castigo* with a short *i*, forgetting his Vergil, and *camera* with long *e*. I have made a collection of Ealdhelm's false quantities, but *pietas* forbids me to publish it.

While dealing with the ionic minor he goes off into a long digression on the sounds that various animals make, but he carefully warns his pupil not

to assume that these noises are all *ionici minores;* the list of sounds is so interesting that I will give a few instances from it: bees ambizant or bombizant; birds minuriunt or uernant or uernicant; asses oncant; horses hinniunt; a jug, when water is poured from it, bibilit; hens cacillant; cocks cantant or cucurriunt; wolves ululant; sheep balant; partridges cacabant; young pigs grunniunt; old pigs grundiunt; chickens and boys pipant; men loquontur; yokels iubilant.

Ealdhelm declares, that Vergil uses the proceleusmatic, *i.e.* a foot of four short syllables, in the case of the words *tenuia* and *ariete*; and yet he tells us only a few lines down, that the digamma is *littera u loco consonantis posita;* this should surely have given him the key to *tenuia* and *ariete.*

He goes very carefully into the changes made in prepositions and verbs, when they come together in composition, and shows that there may be three results: (a) the verb may suffer, (b) the preposition may suffer, (c) both may suffer; and this suffering takes four different shapes, all of which he illustrates fully. He then deals with accentuation, which he says the Greeks call *prosodia*, and next he gives a short account of the synzygiae or rhetorical feet, which he names as follows: proxilius, diprolius, diopros, trampus, cribussus, namprossimalus, phymarus, atrorbus, riuatus, pranulus, linuatus, machaus,

matrimus, phynulus, and febrinus. The proxilius he explains thus, — — — ⏑⏑⏑; the diprolius thus, ⏑⏑⏑ — — —; the diopros thus, — — ⏑⏑⏑⏑; the trampus thus, ⏑⏑⏑⏑ — —; the rest he leaves unexplained, and he ends this part of his subject with following jest: 'moreover there exists the name of a 'synzygia used for a compound word, which in the 'genitive plural is found to consist of nine syllables 'and twenty letters, *e.g.* Constantinopolitanus— 'suppose one were mentioning the patriarch of 'Constantinople (pontifex Constantinopolitanus), of 'which the genitive plural would be pontificum 'Constantinopolitanorum.' But the reader should note that *Constantinopolitanorum* contains more than twenty letters, and, if he dabbles in the so-called 'higher criticism,' he can bring this instance forward to show, how easily numbers get altered in transcription, and moreover he ought to be able to see, what caused the alteration here. Ealdhelm does not give us the name of this synzygia; perhaps it was too long.

After boasting that he is the first Englishman to study and teach Latin metres, Ealdhelm points out what a worthy study it is, and how the great Emperor Theodosius, with the cares of almost all the world upon his shoulders, daily spent some time in it, and copied out and had at his fingers' ends the eighteen volumes of the grammarian Priscian.

Ealdhelm ends the work with the following partly riming prayer:

> Vtinam nobis praesentium rerum possessio
> non sit futurarum remuneratio!
> Vtinam caducarum copia
> non sit secutarum inopia!
> Vtinam lenocinantis mundi oblectamenta
> aeternae beatitudinis non gignant detrimenta!

Quin potius, transacto fragilis uitae interuallo, succedant suffragante Christo perpetua praemia meritorum! Quod Ipse praestare dignetur, Qui pro nobis in patibulo pependit, cum Aeterno Patre uiuens ac regnans cum Spiritu Sancto per infinita semper saecula saeculorum. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

Ealdhelm's Treatise 'On Virginity.'
His Letter to Geruntius.
Other Letters.

THE next work, I shall deal with, is that 'On Virginity'; which Ealdhelm wrote in prose, and then produced a version in hexameter verse, to which he added a poem 'On the eight principle vices.'

The prose work is entitled *De Laudibus Virginum siue de Virginitate Sanctorum;* it consists of about sixty five pages of fifty nine lines each, and contains short biographies both of men and women, who have distinguished themselves by their moral purity, as shown in having no dealings with the opposite sex. This is such a delicate subject, that I do not propose to discuss it as fully as Ealdhelm does.

This prose treatise is dedicated to the Abbess Hildelith and nine other nuns of the convent of Barking in Essex, recently founded by Bishop Earconwald of London. Of all God's creatures,

except perhaps human beings, there were none dearer to Ealdhelm than bees; they were to him the very pattern of all that is clean and clever and industrious, and all their good qualities were made the more worthy by the way in which he, like a faithful student of Vergil, believed them to come into existence and propagate their race (Vergil, G iv. 197—202); they were the true type of virginity. Their courage, their loyalty, their discipline moved him to ecstasies of admiration, and this appears all through his writings, but especially in this treatise 'On Virginity.' I shall here quote a short extract to make this clear, and to indicate the style of writing, in which Ealdhelm indulges, when he means to 'show off,' so to speak. He exhorts the nuns of Barking to imitate the industry of the most sagacious bees, 'which, when the dewy morn appears and the 'beams of the most limpid sun arise, pour thick 'armies of their dancing crowds from the hive over 'the open fields; now lying in the honey-bearing 'leaves of the marigolds or in the purple flowers of 'the mallows they suck the nectar drop by drop; 'now flying ronnd the yellowing willows and the 'golden tops of the broom they carry their plunder 'on numerous thighs and burthened legs, from which 'they fashion their waxen castles; now crowded 'about the rounded berries of the ivy and the light 'shoots of the flourishing linden tree they construct

'the multiform machine of their honeycombs with 'angular and open cells.'

This passage in the Latin is full of alliteration, it is somewhat over-burdened with epithets and there is a roundabout way of saying simple things; consequently modern writers on Ealdhelm, ever since Sharon Turner's days, have been inclined to sneer at him, partly I think because they find him hard to translate and will not take the trouble to find out the meanings of the out-of-the-way words he often uses; and yet they should know that Boniface and Alcuin show the same faults; and if their reading has ever taken them to Sidonius and other writers of what Professor Freeman called the Latin *Renaissance*, they will surely recognise, whence Ealdhelm's 'grand style' comes. Again the love of alliteration was natural in an Englishman; the fragments of vernacular poetry of this time are full of it, and so too are the old English law-terms. When Ealdhelm gets angry he writes often in quite simple telling phrases; if any of my readers have a prejudice against him because of his style, let them remember what a tyrant style is. Who has not read pages and pages of Ruskinesque and Carlylese?

After encouraging the nuns to study the Holy Scriptures and grammar, Ealdhelm shows how the life of the cloister is nearer heaven than any other.

At the same time he warns his readers against spiritual pride and points out that of the ten Virgins in the Gospel only five were wise.

He does not wish to throw any slight on matrimony; indeed it is a necessity, even the greatest saints have to be born; but he draws a trenchant contrast between a wife and a virgin. A wife, he says, likes to have her neck adorned with crescents (lunulis), and her arms with bracelets and her fingers with rings; a virgin longs to shine in the fair garb of modesty and to be decked with the white pearls of good deeds. A wife is busy plaiting her hair and curling it with irons, and tinting her cheeks with rouge; a virgin prefers to let her hair be unkempt and her locks unbrushed, while she carries the palm of chastity and wears on her head a crown of glory. All nuns alas ! are not like this ideal of Ealdhelm's, as he shows in chapter lviii. of this treatise, for he laments that the 'religious' of both sexes are often much too fond of dress, 'contrary to the decrees of the canons and the rules of the regular life'; he has actually seen nuns dressed in the following fashion : they wore a purple under-dress (subucula), a red tunic or body (tunica), with a stomacher (capitium) and long sleeves trimmed with silk stripes (manicae sericis clauatae); their shoes were of red leather; the hair of their forehead and temples elegantly (concinne) curled with irons; instead of a black veil

they wore a coloured and white head-dress (mafors), which, being attached to ribbons (uittae) passing round the hair, hung down to their ankles, and their nails were pared to a point like the claws of a falcon.

If any lady does me the honour to read this, I would have her understand, that the *subucula* was a complete dress covering the whole body, and was visible, perhaps at the neck, and also as a skirt below the *tunica*, which I imagine to have been rather more than the body of a dress; so that the general effect must have been something like that of the dress, in which Dolly Varden is represented in the old illustrations of Barnaby Rudge.

This style of dress shocked Ealdhelm exceedingly; even yet the horror and shame of it throbs through the sentences, in which he describes it.

Ealdhelm now points out, that in a certain volume an angel is made to explain the difference between virginity, chastity and married life. By chastity he here means that condition, in which man and wife live together as brother and sister. Virginity, the angel says, is gold, chastity silver, married life brass; virginity is riches, chastity a moderate competence, married life poverty; virginity is peace, chastity ransom, married life slavery;

virginity is the sun, chastity the moon, married life darkness; virginity is dry land, chastity a harbour, married life the open sea, (Ealdhelm was clearly a poor sailor); virginity is life, chastity a fainting fit, married life death; virginity is purple clothing, chastity is *rediuiua* (I wonder what this is), married life flannel.

Ealdhelm next proceeds to illustrate the virgin-life by instances taken from the Old Testament, the New Testament and Christian Hagiology; from the Old Testament he gives us short biographies of Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; from the New Testament he gives us S. John the Baptist, S. John the Evangelist, to whom he attributes some apocryphal miracles, S. Thomas, S. Paul and S. Luke. The collect for S. Luke's day, written in 1549, reads like an echo of this passage from Ealdhelm : 'Lucas, qui apud Antiochiam 'medicinale cataplasma procurans, primo purulentas 'corporum ualetudines et aegrotas uiscerum fibras, 'ac deinde spiritales animarum incommoditates 'torrido dogmatum cauterio seu Diuini Verbi 'phlebotomo salubriter sanabat.' Next we have accounts of the following holy men: Clement 'the first successor of the doorkeeper of heaven and second bishop of the Roman Church'; Sylvester, who baptised Constantine and so cured him of leprosy ; Ambrose of Milan ; Martin of Tours ;

Gregory of Nazianzus; Anthony of Egypt, patriarch of Monks; Hilarion of Palestine, who used to keep his recalcitrant body sternly in subjection: 'Ego te, inquit, asellum faciam, ut non calcitres'; Benedict, Ealdhelm's own great patron, of whom he writes:

> Primo qui statuit nostrae certamina uitae,
> Qualiter optatam teneant coenobia normam.

Malchus, Narcissus, Athanasius, Babylas, Cosmas and Damian, Chrysantus and Daria, Julianus of Cilicia, Amos of Nitria, and Apollonius.

Next follow short biographies of holy women; the Blessed Virgin, Caecilia, Agatha, Lucia, Felicitas, Anastasia, Justina, Eugenia, Agnes, Thecla and Eulalia, Scholastica S. Benedict's sister, Christina, Dorothea, Constantina, Attica and Artemia, Eustochia, Demetrias, Chionia, Irene and Agape, Rufina and Secunda, Anatolia and Victoria.

Only once in dealing with these instances of his favourite virtue does Ealdhelm venture to lapse into a humorous mood, and this is when he relates what befell Dulcitius, an officer of the Emperor Diocletian, to whom was committed the task of examining the three maidens, Chionia, Irene and Agape, to see if they would offer incense to the gods or not. So attracted was he by their fresh beauty, which owed nothing to rouge or curling irons, that he became

like wax in front of a stove and was so 'consumed by the blind fire of love,' that in the dead of night he made his way into the scullery, in which for the sake of safe custody he ordered the maidens to be locked. The scullery was full of pots and kettles and other cooking utensils which had not been cleaned, and Dulcitius hearing the maidens singing psalms in the darkness tried to catch them, but only succeeded in embracing and kissing the dirty pots and kettles. When he was well blackened with this unsatisfactory lovemaking, his body as filthy as his mind, he withdrew, and, *uelut Aethiopica nigritudine fuscatus,* looking, that is, like a 'Nigger Minstrel,' presented himself to his parasites and domestics, who failed to recognise him.

It may be as well here to give the poetic version of this incident; it will do, for those who can translate Latin, as a specimen of Ealdhelm's usual style of verse; those, who cannot, already know the story:

Sed nocturna quies cum fessos occupat artus,
Dulcia dum famulae cecinissent carmina Christo,
Odis Psalmorum pulsantes ostia caeli,
Audet atrox sanctam spurco flammatus amore
Audacter cellam stolidis inrumpere plantis.
Sed praestante Deo caecatur corde malignus,
Basia cacabis dum stultus tradidit atris:

Sic ollis niger et furua sartagine teter
Per totam noctem praeses deluditur amens,
Defensante Deo sacrasque tuente puellas.
Egreditur tandem infelix gurgustia linquens,
Quem scelerum socii nequeunt cognoscere fronte,
Sed procul abscedunt uasto crepitante tumultu,
Linquentes laruam,—furuom phantasma putabant.

The poetic version 'On Virginity' entitled *De Laude Virginum* consists of 2347 lines and is dedicated *Ad Maximam Abbatissam,* the same lady Hildelith, no doubt, whom Ealdhelm greets in the prose version. The persons, whose praises are sung, are the same as those of the prose version, with the following exceptions: there is no mention of S. Thomas in the poem, on the other hand a certain John of Egypt is commemorated who was apparently a philosopher and physician; Malchus too is omitted in the poem, while Gervasius and Protasius are commemorated instead. Felicitas and Anastasia are omitted in the poem; so are Christina and Dorothea, while Chionia, Irene and Agape, though their tale is told, are not mentioned by name, but are described as the maidens whom Anastasia befriended.

This poem like the 'Riddles' has an acrostic preface, and it was evidently published, if I may so

say, at the same time as the prose version and as a part of it, for the first line of the preface runs thus:

M etrica tirones nunc promant carmina casto S,

that is to say, now that we have finished the prose version let us write in verse of these examples of chastity.

The acrostic consists of thirty eight lines corresponding to the thirty eight letters of the line just quoted, *i.e.* the second line begins with E and ends with O, the third begins with T and ends with T, and so on. The last line is the first line written backwards; the first line therefore must be such, that it will scan when it has been made to stand upon its head. Here it is:

S otsac anim ractna morpcnun senorit acirte M

One may divide the syllables, as one likes, to get a caesura. Bishop Browne thinks that Ealdhelm simply got tired of making this acrostic, and wrote the first line backwards from indolence; I am sure this is not the case. That Ealdhelm could have any difficulty in writing a line beginning with S and ending with M, is absurd. The truth is, I believe, that to wind up with the first line written backwards is 'part of the game.' It would have been a greater feat of course to make the first line so artfully, that it would be equally intelligible standing on its head,

but that would have been very difficult. Sidonius gives us two lines of this nature, which I quote:

Roma tibi subito motibus ibit amor,

and

Sole medere pede ede perede melos.

The former of these is distinctly ingenious, the latter contains a false quantity and a hiatus, and has no satisfactory meaning. Very few lines, I imagine, if written backwards will scan and still fewer will have meaning, much less the same meaning as they have when written in the usual way.

The poem *De Octo Principalibus Vitiis* consists of four hundred and sixty six lines and is a continuation of the *De Laudibus Virginum,* as the opening line shows. These vices are: excess in eating and drinking, impurity, love of money, anger, gloominess, indifference, conceit, and pride. This list is distinctly interesting; Ealdhelm's word for gloominess is *tristitiae,* he means by it sulking, a tendency to despair and want of faith; his word for indifference is *acedia*, the vice of people who take no interest in life, never study, sleep too much and talk nonsense; his word for conceit is *kenodoxia,* it was in consequence of this vice that our first parent was led to eat the apple, it produces foolish disputations, heresy, boastfulness, and presumption; his word for pride is *superbia*; it is a fierce and cruel vice and

makes men undisciplined, ready to flout superiors, contemptuous towards equals; it is the vice of Cain.

The poem *De Basilica aedificata a Bugge* consists of eighty five lines, and is full of interest; further, we shall find it of the utmost help when we come to settle the chronological order of Ealdhelm's works.

Bugge was a relative of Ealdhelm, she was the daughter of King Centwine; I have already pointed out that Ealdhelm was not Centwine's son, as some have imagined. If he had been, we must have learnt it from this poem; Ealdhelm could not write just as he does here of Centwine, if he were his father; the tender relationship of father and son would come out somehow. The church that Bugge built was at Withington in Gloucestershire, not very far from Malmesbury.

I cannot do better than quote, what Bishop Browne writes about this lady's name:

> 'The Old-English word Bugge came to mean a 'thing of terror. Coverdale's Bible renders Ps. 'xc(i). 5 *affrayed for eny Bugges by night.* 'Speed, in his *History of Great Britain*, says of 'the opponents of the married clergy, that '"women in those days were great bugs in their

'eyes." A humbug, or hum bug, is a sham 'bogie. The use of the word as a personal 'name for ladies makes it clear that it had 'originally a complimentary sense; probably it 'meant a fairy, a sprite, and thence a ghost, 'this being the meaning of the Welsh *bwg*.'

The Lowland Scotch 'bogie,' really 'bogle,' has of course the same origin, and in the North of England I have heard a ghost called a 'boggart.'

In this poem we are told that King Centwine had retired into a Monastery and is now dead, so also is his successor Cadwalla, and King Ine is now on the throne. Ealdhelm then goes on to describe the church; it contains twelve altars dedicated to the Apostles, besides one in the apse, *i.e.* behind the high altar, dedicated to the Virgin. On this dedication-feast hymns shall be sung to Christ and sweet anthems; brethren and sisters shall join together in this singing and there shall be an accompaniment of instrumental music, for this day is a high day, it is the 15th of August, the birthday of the Blessed Virgin, says Ealdhelm. What are we to make of this statement? Now-a-days the 15th of August is the feast of the Assumption, and the 7th of September is the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin. On this point Bishop Browne has some interesting remarks.

Gifts, says Ealdhelm, glitter upon the altars; the church is all glorious within, the sun streaming through the windows of glass,—then a novelty in England. The *pallia* are woven of cloth of gold and form fair coverings or curtains for the sacred altar; the golden chalice sparkles with gems, the broad paten is of silver, bearing 'the divine medicine of our life,' for we are 'nourished by the Body and Sacred Blood of Christ.' The altar cross is formed of plates of gold and silver decked with gems, and from the roof hangs a thurible surrounded with capitals and pouring forth incense-smoke, while the priests are bidden offer the mass. This thurible was evidently made in the shape of a pillared edifice, probably polygonal.

The poem, which follows this, *De aris Beatae Mariae et Duodecim Apostolis aedificatis*, is simply a continuation of it. It tells us that Bugge's church is dedicated to the Virgin, and then goes on to celebrate the Virgin and the Apostles whose altars the church contains. The poem consists of three hundred and twenty three lines. When we count the number of Apostles, whom Ealdhelm mentions, we find that there are thirteen, and this is the order in which they are noted: Peter, Paul, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, James 'the son of the maternal aunt of Jesus,' Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon Zelotes, Thaddeus, and Matthias.

I recommend this description of the worship of the Church of England in the 7th century, to those clergy, 'numbering nearly 3000, 'who 'have signified their adherence to the principle ' of the Appeal to the First Six Centuries.' I cannot think, that they, with their wide historical knowledge and respect for times of primitive purity, will lightly neglect the style of worship used by the Church of England in the first century of her existence, a style which must differ little, if at all, from that used by the Western Church in the previous century.

No doubt such a glorious church, as Bugge's, would have an organ, though Ealdhelm does not mention it among the instruments which accompanied the singing; he does however describe an organ in the *De Laudibus Virginum*, as follows:

Si uero quisquam chordarum respuit odas
Et cantu gracili refugit contentus adesse,
Maxima millenis auscultans organa flabris
Mulceat auditum uentosis follibus iste,
Quamlibet auratis fulgescant cetera capsis.

Ealdhelm was himself a skilful player on the lute, as we know, and it seems to me that here is a little sarcasm concerning those, who are not content with the 'graceful music of stringed instruments' but prefer to 'soothe their ears' with the blasts of

the great organs with their gusty bellows and thousand pipes glittering in their gilded cases.

Ealdhelm also wrote a short poem, of twenty one lines according to the version of Faritius in his *Vita Aldhelmi,* of nineteen lines according to that of William of Malmesbury; this poem is entitled *In honorem Apostolorum Petri et Pauli.* It is of no importance, but a question arises about the occasion on which it was written. Faritius says that Ealdhelm wrote it on entering the Church of S.S. Peter and Paul at Rome; William says that he wrote it for the dedication of the Church which he built at Malmesbury in honour of these Apostles. I have no doubt the latter account is the true one.

I shall now deal with a work of Ealdhelm's, which from the purely historical point of view must be regarded as among the most interesting of his writings, I mean the letter which he wrote in the spring of 705 to Geraint, King of West Wales. It is much too long for me to give in full; the extracts, that I shall make, will be such as will prove most worth reading.

In the spring of 705, while Ealdhelm was still Abbot of Malmesbury, a synod of the English church met in Wessex, at which it was decided that he, as being the man most fit for the task, should address a

letter to the king of the West Welsh, remonstrating with them for their errors in matters concerning the Catholic Faith. The points to be laid before these Welshmen were four: (a) they were at variance among themselves; (b) they wore the wrong form of tonsure; (c) they observed a wrong cycle in settling the date for Easter, nay, they were even *quarto-decimani;* (d) they treated English Christians in a most contemptuous and unbrotherly fashion.

Now a word or two may be said on these four points; first, these Welshmen might retort that the English occasionally were at variance among themselves, as witness the case of the unhappy S. Wilfrid; second, they might have suggested that the question of the form of tonsure was one rather for hairdressers than for theologians, but I fear that in these early days we could hardly expect so crude a view; third, they might have pointed out that the cycle they used was once in use among the Romans; it was the Romans who had departed from 'primitive purity,' not the Welsh, and the Welsh certainly were not *quarto-decimani*, though S. John the Evangelist was; fourth, they might have pointed out that the English had not been specially kind to them, they had driven them further and further back towards the west and taken much that was precious from them; indeed, they might have raised the cry against 'alien immigration' and the flooding of the country by

'undesirables.' Unfortunately we have not got Geraint's reply to Ealdhelm, supposing he ever made one.

Concerning this letter Bede says, that it was the means of bringing to a right view in these matters many of the West Welsh, whom the West Saxons had subdued, *i.e.* many of the Welsh inhabitants of Dorset, Somerset, and the land of the Exe, but he does not tell us what effect it had on Geraint and his subjects, to whom it was addressed.

William of Malmesbury had never seen this letter and he did not know that it was addressed to Geraint; following what Bede writes, he thought it was addressed to the Welsh subjects of King Ine, and he adds, 'to this day the Welsh owe their correction '(in the matter of keeping Easter) to Ealdhelm; and 'yet, owing to their inborn wickedness they are 'ungrateful to his memory and have destroyed his 'letter.'

The letter is still with us, and I now proceed to give some extracts from it.

> To the most glorious Lord, who wields the sceptre of the Western realm, whom I, as the Decerner of hearts and affairs of men is witness, embrace with fraternal affection, to Geruntius the King, and with him to all priests of God

ministering throughout Domnonia, I, Ealdhelm, unworthily exercising the office of Abbot, wish desirable health in the Lord.

When I was lately at a council of bishops—where from almost the whole of Britain an innumerable company of the priests of God was come together, gathered especially for this purpose, that because of their anxiety for the churches and the safety of souls, the decrees and statutes of the Fathers might be studied by all and maintained in common under the protection of Christ, these matters therefore being duly accomplished,—the whole priestly council constrained your humble servant with like precept and similar expression, that to your pious presence I should address a letter and should intimate in writing their paternal petition and wholesome suggestion, that is to say, concerning the unity of the Catholic Church and the concord of the Christian religion..... We have heard and discovered by information from various sources that your priests do not agree among themselves in the rule of the Catholic Faith according to the teaching of Scripture, and that through their quarrels and strife of words grave schism and cruel scandal is produced in the Church of Christ..... How widely indeed is the follow-

ing conduct at variance with the Catholic Faith and Apostolic Tradition! The priests of Dyfed on the other side of the Severn Sea, boasting of their peculiar and special cleanliness of living, exceedingly abominate our communion, so much so that they do not deign to celebrate the offices with us in church, nor to partake with us of food at table in social friendliness. Nay more, any broken meat that we leave they toss forth to be devoured by greedy dogs and filthy swine; vessels too and drinking cups they insist on being scrubbed with sand and grit or ashes, so that they may be purified. The salutation of peace is not given us, nor the kiss of fraternal affection offered, though the Apostle bids us 'Greet one another with a holy kiss.' Nor is soap and water and towel provided for our hands nor bath for our feet, though the Saviour girt himself with a towel and washed his disciples' feet, handing down to us this rule for our imitation, 'Even as I have done to you, so do ye to one another.' Yes indeed, and if our people go to these parts with a view to settling there, they do not allow them to be admitted to their society, until they have been forced to pass a space of forty days in penance.

One can feel the good man's anger rising as he thinks, how these Welshmen, whom the English had chased

SHERBORNE OLD CASTLE, PART OF KEEP.

from many a field, treat with indignity and suspicion the 'Imperial race,' as we English in expansive moments call ourselves.

Here are two letters of quite another sort; the first is to his old friend and teacher, Abbot Hadrian of Canterbury, and runs thus:

> To Hadrian, the most reverend father and venerable preceptor of my rude childhood, I, Ealdhelm, a servant of Christ's family and humble disciple of your goodness, wish health, etc.
>
> My dearest friend, whom with the thankfulness of pure affection I embrace, I confess that, since I left Kent and was parted from your friendly society about three years ago, I, humble as I am, have burned even to this day with an ardent longing to be with you again; and this too, as my desire is, I should long ago have planned to carry out, if the course of events and the chances of the times had permitted it, and if divers obstacles had not prevented me, and especially if I had not been hindered by ill health, which is parching my wasting limbs even to the marrow. This same ill health it was, which, while I was a second time with you after my first course of study, forced me to return home.

The second letter is to his sister Osgith, who had evidently consulted him about a nun, concerning whose baptism there was some doubt; it runs as follows:

> To my most beloved and dearest sister, whom with sincere affection I venerate, I, Ealdhelm, unworthily exercising the duties of an Abbot, wish health in the Lord.
>
> You must know, dear sister, that I have asked the bishop about the baptism of our sister, and that he has given leave for that nun to be baptised, but privately only and not in public. I salute you, Osgith, in love from the inmost chamber of my heart, beseeching you with earnest prayers not to cease occupying your mind with assiduous meditation on the Scriptures, that so you may carry out the advice of the Psalmist: 'In his law will he exercise himself day and night'; and the same Psalmist in another place testifies thus: 'How sweet are thy words unto my mouth,' etc. Christ says by his apostle, 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much'; therefore tell all the sisters through Christ to remember to pray for me. Farewell! ten times beloved, yea, a hundred and a thousand times. God keep you.

I have already mentioned very briefly a letter from Ealdhelm to a certain Æthelwald, a favourite pupil;

we possess also a letter from Æthelwald, a pupil, and I believe the same Æthelwald, to Ealdhelm, in which Æthelwald tells his master that he is sending him three poems, the first in hexameter verse consisting of seventy lines, the third not in a classical metre but in rimed octosyllables and dedicated to Ealdhelm himself, the second also in rimed octosyllables and dedicated to one Winfrith, 'meo tuoque clienti,' a pupil of Ealdhelm and Æthelwald, which describes Winfrith's voyage over sea. I do not believe that this Winfrith is S. Boniface of Maintz, though it is just possible that he might be.

Of the hexameter poem we have no trace, but there are, printed by Migne at the end of Ealdhelm's works, *four* poems in octosyllable metre; the second of which concerns a voyage over sea and a pilgrimage to Rome; the third poem is dedicated to Ealdhelm, and the pun on his name *priscus cassis* occurs twice in it. I will quote a few lines from it:

Aldelmum nam altissimum
Cano atque clarissimum,
Alto nostratum nomine
nuncupatum, et numine
pollentem per caelestia,
potentem ac terrestria.

The fourth poem is by Æthelwald, as is evident from the eighth line, and it gives us a glowing description of Ealdhelm; it begins thus:

Vale uale, fidissime
Phile Christi carissime,
Quem in cordis cubiculo
Cingo amoris uinculo.

It describes how Ealdhelm is of virile shape, and sage in word and deed, of noble race and dignified stature, agile, with white or bright hair, 'Caput candescens crinibus,' keen eyes, red cheeks, excellent hearing, wonderful hands as we should expect a good lute-player to have, graceful and strong legs, 'tibiae cursu teretes'; in short, says Æthelwald, such are Ealdhelm's perfections that they can hardly be counted, and so he ends by wishing him a happy life under God's protection, and everlasting joy in the heavenly country hereafter.

The first poem may very well be by Ealdhelm himself. It describes a tour through Devon and Cornwall, and therefore was written some years after 682; it tells how the party took refuge in a cottage during a heavy storm, and left it just before it was struck by lightning; finally they found shelter in a church; it begins thus:

Lector caste catholice
Atque obsecro athletice,

Tuis pulsatus precibus
Obnixe flagitantibus
Hymnista carmen cecini
Atque responsa reddidi,
Sicut pridem pepigeram,
Quando profectus fueram
Vsque diram Cornubiam
Per carentem Dumnoniam
Florulentis cespitibus
Et fecundis graminibus.

I suppose they went over Dartmoor, or at any rate along the Roman road immediately to the south of it. Migne prints these four poems with lines all out of order, and it took me some time to arrange them in their proper sequence. I afterwards found that in Dr. Giles's edition of Ealdhelm they were in the right order.

The letter printed at the end of Ealdhelm's works and entitled *Anonymi Epistula ad sororem Anonymam* is written by a man, who knew Ealdhelm's works and had been a pupil of S. Boniface of Maintz. An alphabet is printed at the end of this letter, but has nothing to do with it; it runs thus: asc, berc, can, dour, ehu, feli, gip, ha, gal, is, ker, lagu, man, not, os, pert, quirun, rat, suigil, tac, ur, ilc, ian, zar. Bishop Browne, quoting I fancy Mr. Manitius, says that this is the Runic Futhorc; Mr.

Manitius says that Professor Wülcker told him so. But surely it is not; where are the characteristic Rune letters? What Mr. Manitius calls the *Alliterationspielereien*, which follow, may be Ealdhelm's—or anybody's; they are of no importance or interest, except R.R.R. which is interpreted: *Rex Romanorum Ruit.* But who on earth bore the title *Rex Romanorum* in Ealdhelm's days?

The poem entitled *Fragmentum de die Iudicii* in hexameter verse, also printed by Migne at the end of Ealdhelm's works, is by Cyprian.

CHAPTER X.

Obscurity of Ealdhelm's writings. Chronology of his works.

IT is true that much of the writings of Ealdhelm is obscure—at any rate to us; but if a decent text of his works were made we should find, I have no doubt, that there would be less obscurity than now appears to be the case. We must, however, be always on the look-out for allusions, brought in without any warning, especially to the Old and New Testaments.

For instance, in his letter to Winberht, Ealdhelm begins thus:

> Domino in dominorum Domino dilectissimo Winberhto Aldhelmus, seruos seruorum Dei, in angulari duorum testamentorum lapide de summis montium uerticibus abscisso, qui statuam quaterno metallorum genere fabricatam, quaterna populorum regna signantem, crura tenus, aurato capite, oppressit, salutem.

This may be translated as follows:

> To Lord Winberht, in the Lord of lords most beloved, I, Ealdhelm, servant of the servants of God, in the corner stone of the two testaments split off from the mountain tops, which brake in pieces as far as the legs the image with head of gold fashioned of four different sorts of metal signifying four kingdoms, wish health.

Now this simply means 'To Winberht, Ealdhelm wishes health in Christ,' as a reference to the prophet Daniel chapter ii. clearly shows.

In Ealdhelm's poetry, certainly, lines are occasionally printed in the wrong order; this is the case, I think, towards the end of the poem on the 'Eight Principal Vices,' and I know it is the case in the octosyllable poems printed in Migne's edition at the end of his works, as I have already noted. An instance will show this clearly. At the end of Poem i. there is the following doxology:

> Doxa Deo ingenito,
> Atque Gnato progenito,
> Simul cum Sancto supera
> Flatu regente saecula.

Perhaps I shall not be believed when I state that the first line of this Doxology is printed as line 174 of the poem, the second line as line 199, the third line as line 175, and the fourth as line 200; and all

the lines throughout this poem have to be rearranged before any sense can be made of them.

The letter to Eahfrith is peculiarly hard to construe; it contains a preface, beginning 'Primitus pantorum procerum,' which has maddened some and amused other students of Ealdhelm; at the same time its meaning is not so hard to make out as some other clauses in the letter. The letter, however, ends with four lines, *three* of which are to be found, with some alterations, in Ealdhelm's own poem on the 'Eight Principal Vices.' By referring to this poem one can get these three lines correct and make out the writer's meaning, but the remaining line, which comes first in the quotation, is given thus:

Digna fiat fante glingio gurgo fugax fambulo.

There is no attempt to make the line scan, and, as it stands, it is nothing but 'gibberish.' I have tried to find the key to what it is meant to represent in the poem, and have failed. But it throws some light on the capacity of the Scribes and Editors, who have dealt with Ealdhelm's writings.

A man of leisure and experience, with a little money to spare and plenty of patience, should edit 'Ealdhelm'; it would bring to the right sort of capable man immense pleasure, and he would win for himself a dignified niche in the Wessex 'Temple

of fame.' As things now are, we cannot do Ealdhelm justice.

Whatever some of the moderns may say of Ealdhelm, the men of old time knew his worth. I have already told what his pupils have written of him; let me now tell what Bede, a man of thirty-seven years of age when Ealdhelm died, has added to that testimony. 'He was a learned man in every 'way, for he was brilliant in his language and 'admirable because of his erudition in all literature both sacred and liberal.' Now Bede's name stands among the very highest of the great names of the world, and to be praised by him is praise indeed.

In the following century another famous man, a kinsman of Ealdhelm, one whose name is very dear to Englishmen, an excellent judge of men and letters, King Alfred himself, in his Hand-book, tells us of Ealdhelm's English poetry, how the song he sang on the bridge of Malmesbury was still enchanting to West Saxon ears. Ealdhelm's English songs and Alfred's Hand-book are both lost, and we should never have known what Alfred thought of him, but for William of Malmesbury.

William of Malmesbury, as a monk of that house over which Ealdhelm had ruled so faithfully, no doubt had a very tender place in his heart for him. In his eyes our great bishop, his great abbot, loomed

larger, it may be, than he would have in the eyes of monks of other houses. Yet among all the great Scholars and Divines, of whom William has written, no one stands out in his pages more prominent than Ealdhelm. William is no mean authority, he is our greatest historian of early times, after Bede. William tells us, that the Greeks are involved in their language, the Romans brilliant, and the English pompatic. By this word 'pompatic' he does not mean pompous, but dignified or stately. He says that 'if you will study Ealdhelm carefully, you will 'find that in his *acumen* he is Greek, in his *brilliancy* 'he is Latin, in his *dignity* he is English.' What he says of Ealdhelm's prose is true; difficult as it sometimes is to construe, it moves with a magnificent swing, like the march of a battalion of the Guards.

I shall now attempt to fix, at any rate approximately, the chronological order of Ealdhelm's writings. In connection with this matter I must confess how much I am indebted to the work of Mr. M. Manitius, entitled 'Zu Aldhelm und Baeda,' published at Vienna in 1886. At the same time I must note, that wider knowledge of the West-Saxon history of this period would have saved him from one or two errors.

The industry shown by Manitius in tracing Ealdhelm's quotations to their sources and in

discussing these ' Quellen ' is beyond all praise; but his work is, and is intended to be, that of the dissecting room; we get from him no notion of the living Ealdhelm; but perhaps he will give it us some day.

First then, for the convenience of my readers, I give a complete list of the undoubted works of Ealdhelm, dividing them as Migne does, into three classes, (a) Letters, (b) Prose works, (c) Poems.

(a) We possess ten letters of Ealdhelm, i. to Abbot Hadrian of S. Augustine's, ii. to his sister Osgith, iii. to Winberht, iv. to Cellanus, v. to Æthelwald, vi. to Wihtfrith, vii. to Bishop Hædde, viii. to Eahfrith, ix. to the clergy of S. Wilfrid, x. to Geraint King of West Wales. At the end of these letters Migne prints a *Grant* of Ealdhelm to his monks (of Malmesbury, Frome and Bradford-on-Avon), of the privilege of having him for their Abbot during his lifetime, though he is now Bishop of Sherborne, and of the right, in the case of each monastery, freely to elect its Abbot for the future. This grant is generally regarded as spurious, but, though it is in a somewhat unusual shape, I do not feel sure that it is so. It is dated 705.

(b) We possess also two Treatises in prose, i. the *Epistula ad Acircium, siue Liber de Septenario, de Metribus, Aenigmatibus et Pedum*

Regulis, ii. *De Laudibus Virginitatis siue de de Virginitate Sanctorum.*

(c) We possess five poems, i. *Versus in honorem Apostolorum Petri et Pauli*, ii. *De Basilica aedificata a Bugge*, iii. *De aris Beatae Mariae et duodecim Apostolis dedicatis*, iv. *De Laudibus Virginum*, v. *De octo principalibus Vitiis.*

Seeing that the two poems, *De Basilica aedificata a Bugge*, and *De aris Beatae Mariae et duodecim Apostolis dedicatis*, are really one work, I shall refer to them, in the following discussion, under *one* title, as 'the poem on Bugge's Church'; seeing also that *De Laudibus Virginum* and *De octo principalibus Vitiis* are one work, I shall refer to them as 'the poem on Virginity.'

In the 'verses in honour of SS. Peter and Paul' we find a line which runs thus, according to Faritius:

Clauiger aetherius, portam qui pandis in aethra.

This same line, with slight variations, is found in four other places in Ealdhelm's works, viz. in the poem on Bugge's Church, in the prose version 'On Virginity,' in the Letter to Acircius, and in the Letter to Geraint. It follows therefore that the prose version 'On Virginity,' the Letter to Acircius, and the Letter to Geraint are later than one of the poems,

whichever it may be, which contains this line. And since the poetic version 'On Virginity' was written later than the prose version, that poem too must be later than one of these poems, which contains this line. The question therefore, which we have to decide, is, which is the earlier poem, that on Bugge's Church, or that in honour of SS. Peter and Paul. Now this latter poem consists of only twenty-one lines, whereas the former consists of five hundred and eight lines ; moreover, the short poem contains eight other lines which, with small variations, occur in the longer poem. Hence we have a short poem of twenty-one lines, nine of which are contained in a larger poem by the same author. Which poem would be written first ? In my opinion it would be the short poem. Manitius decides the other way.

I shall assume then, that the earliest poetic work of Ealdhelm, we possess, is the *Versus in honorem Apostolorum Petri et Pauli.*

We can determine very nearly the date, at which the poem on Bugge's Church was published. Bugge got the land on which to build her church, as Bishop Browne tells us, from Oshere a Mercian under-king who is known to have ruled the Hwiccas in 680 and in 693. Further, Ealdhelm tells us, in this poem on Bugge's Church, that King Cadwalla of Wessex is dead, and we know that Cadwalla died in

Rome not long after the 10th April, 689. It seems to me that unless this death had recently occurred, Ealdhelm would hardly have alluded to it here as he does. I have therefore come to the conclusion, that Bugge's Church was dedicated in 690, and that the poem therefore belongs to that year. Hence we infer that the poem on SS. Peter and Paul is probably earlier than 690.

Ealdhelm in his letter to Eahfrith quotes lines from the poetic version 'On Virginity.' In this letter Archbishop Theodore is spoken of as still living, though he is called 'beatae memoriae Theodorus'; the archbishop died in 690. Therefore the whole treatise on Virginity, prose and poetry, was finished by 690 and possibly some time before. Therefore it is probably earlier than the poem on Bugge's church, and so probably is the letter to Eahfrith.

With reference to the letter to Acircius, we must note that it is dedicated to *King* Ealdfrith, who began to reign in 684 and died in the first half of 705. We are told that he had been Ealdhelm's friend and adopted son for twenty years when this letter was published; one can hardly imagine Ealdhelm calling anyone his adopted son, while he (Ealdhelm) was uuder thirty or forty years of age, therefore I suggest that the letter to Acircius was

published between 690 and 700, probably nearer the later date.

The letter to Abbot Hadrian tells us that three years have passed since Ealdhelm finished his second course of study at Canterbury; he cannot have begun his first course till 671 at the earliest, therefore I think we may fairly date this letter *circ* 680.

The letter to Winberht we may date *circ* 688, for a spurious charter, based on this letter, purports to be dated that year.

The letter to Osgith was written before Ealdhelm became bishop, *i.e.* earlier than summer, 705. The same may be said of the letter to Cellanus, for Cellanus in his letter to Ealdhelm, which calls forth this reply, calls Ealdhelm Archimandrite, *i.e.* Abbot; Æthelwald addresses Ealdhelm as Abbot, therefore if Ealdhelm's letter to Æthelwald is in answer to this same Æthelwald, the same may be said of its date.

Ealdhelm's letter to Bishop Hædde was written before he published the letter to Acircius, and while he was busy on it, probably therefore between 690 and 700.

The Letter to the Clergy of S. Wilfrid may belong to the year 686 or to 704; Bishop Browne

prefers the earlier date; Haddan and Stubbs, as well as Canon W. Bright, the later. I think the probability is that the later date is the right one.

The letter to Wihtfrith gives us no hint of the date at which it was written, but there is no suggestion in it that Ealdhelm is a bishop; therefore I suppose we may infer that it was written before summer, 705.

The letter to Geraint was written, as we know, in the spring of 705, and the grant to Ealdhelm's monks of liberty to elect an Abbot, in the autumn of the same year. Of course if this grant is not genuine, its date does not matter.

As a result of the above discussion I venture to put forth the following list of Ealdhelm's more important writings in chronological order :

Epistula ad Hadrianum, *circ.* 680.
De Laudibus Virginitatis (prose version),
De Laudibus Virginum (poetic version),
De octo principalibus Vitiis,
} before 690.

De Basilica aedificata a Bugge,
De aris Beatae Mariae et duodecim Apostolis dedicatis
} *circ.* 690

Epistula ad Acircium, *circ.* 698.

Epistula ad Geruntium Dumnoniae Regem, 705.

I have written this book as simply as I could, and in such a way that it will, I hope, be intelligible to those who are not familiar with Latin; in most cases where I have not translated a Latin quotation, my reason has been that I wished my readers to hear the sound and swing of the Latin rather than to get the meaning of it; this they can do by reading the quotations aloud for themselves. I have consistently all through spelt Ealdhelm's name as it was spelt by the English of his own time. *Eald* is the Old English form of *old*, and *helm* is of course *helmet*. *Aldhelm* is the Latin shape of his name without any case-ending; but why we should spell the name *Aldhelm*, when we are writing in English, I cannot understand. If anyone thinks we should now-a-days call him *Oldhelm*, he might have a case for argument. The name was pronounced pretty nearly *Yaldhelm*.

It has given me great pleasure to write this little book, and I hope that many of my friends and neighbours will find some at any rate in reading it. Here, above all places in West-Wessex, we are in duty bound to know something of Ealdhelm; for here the work he began for it, especially as a teacher of the young, has had its most conspicuous and abiding home.

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Bennett's Printing Works, Sherborne.